

Living The Christian Life

**Living The Christian Life**

*What It Means to  
Be A Christian*

by

Don Stewart

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## **Living The Christian Life**

### ***What It Means to Be a Christian***

#### **Introduction**

In this book, we will look at a number of basic questions about Christian living. We will find out what it means to be a Christian, as well as how a person becomes a Christian. There will also be a discussion of what Christians are, and what they are not.

Our second section will answer questions about the will of God for our lives. This is one issue in which Christians are constantly asking about. This should provide a better understanding of what the Lord expects from us.

Our third section gives some Biblical principles for successful Christian living. They are helpful suggestions that should cause people to live in the manner that the Bible encourages believers to live.

Our goal is simple: we trust that this book will encourage unbelievers to make their commitment to Jesus Christ.

For believers, it is our goal that those who read and study this book will have a better understanding of what genuine Christianity is all about.

## Question 1

### What Is A Christian?

The primary question that needs to be addressed concerns the definition of a Christian. What exactly is a Christian? Simply stated, a Christian is a person who has trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior.

#### The Terms That The Bible Uses To Describe Those Who Believe In Jesus

There are a number of terms that are used in the New Testament to describe those who believe in Jesus. They include the following.

##### 1. Christian

While Christian is the common term that is used today for those who believe in Jesus Christ, it is only used once in the New Testament by believers to describe themselves. Peter used the term for those who suffered persecution by the Romans:

Don't be ashamed to suffer for being a Christian. Praise God that you belong to him (1 Peter 4:16 CEV).

Though the term Christian was first given to believers in Christ by non-believers, it soon became the common word to describe those who believe in Jesus. Today it is the primary designation for believers.

##### 2. Disciple

In the New Testament, one of the common designations for those who believe in Jesus is "disciple." Often, they are called "His disciples." For example, we read the following in Luke's gospel:

Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, "Who do the crowds say I am?" (Luke 9:18 NIV).

Jesus commanded those who believed in Him to make disciples. Indeed, the final words of Matthew's gospel contain this instruction. We read:

When Jesus came near, he spoke to them. He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. So wherever you go, make disciples of all nations: Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:18,19 God's Word).

The word disciple comes from the word for "discipline." A disciple is one who follows a particular master. In the case of believers, that Master is Jesus Christ. We are to follow Him in all things. The Bible says that He is our example:

If we say we are his, we must follow the example of Christ (1 John 2:6 CEV).

We, as disciples, are to live our lives with Jesus as our example.

### **We Can Only Serve One Master**

Jesus made it clear that we can only serve one master. Matthew records Him saying:

No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24 CSB).

Therefore, the Christian has only one Master—Christ.

### **3. The Elect**

Those who believe in Jesus are also called the “elect.” Paul wrote to Timothy about how he endured hardship for the sake of the elect. He put it this way:

Therefore I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory (2 Timothy 2:10 NIV).

Elect has the idea of someone who is chosen. The Bible says that Jesus has chosen those who believe in Him. We read in John’s gospel the following statement of Jesus about choosing His Twelve Disciples:

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you (John 15:16 ESV).

We have been chosen, or elected, by Him.

### **4. Believers**

Those who trusted Christ as their Savior were also called believers. In the first chapter of the Book of Acts we read the following:

In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) (Acts 1:15 NIV).

The object of their belief is the Person of Jesus Christ.

### **5. Servants Of Christ**

The New Testament also designates believers as “servants of Christ.” Paul used this description when he wrote to the Corinthians. He said:

So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God’s mysteries God (1 Corinthians 4:1 NLT).

This is consistent with our calling. Those who believe in Jesus are His servants. They follow the example of their Master who came to earth to serve others. Matthew recorded Jesus explaining His coming into the world in the following manner:

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28 NKJV).

Jesus is our example of what a true servant should be—one who looks to the needs of others.

## 6. Saints

Those who believe in Jesus are also called “saints.” This has the idea of being set apart for service to God. Paul addressed *all* believers as saints. We find this when he wrote to the believers in Corinth:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy *our* brother, to the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints who are in all Achaia (2 Corinthians 1:1 NKJV).

All believers in Jesus Christ are saints. We have been set apart to serve Him.

## Terms Used By Unbelievers To Describe Christians

There are a number of terms in the New Testament that unbelievers used to describe those who believed in Jesus. They include the following designations.

### 1. Christian

The first use of the term Christian was by the unbelievers in the pagan city of Antioch in Syria. We read about this in the Book of Acts. It says:

Then he went to Tarsus to search for Saul, and when he found him he brought him to Antioch. For a whole year they met with the church and taught large numbers. The disciples were first called Christians at Antioch (Acts 11:26 CSB).

The Gentiles (non-Jews) called those who believed in Jesus “Christians” to distinguish them from the Jews who did not believe in Jesus.

## King Agrippa Used The Word Christian

The second usage of the designation “Christian” was by unbelieving King Agrippa. This occurred when the Apostle Paul was attempting to convert him:

Agrippa said to Paul, “In a short time would you persuade me to be a Christian?” (Acts 26:28 ESV).

This is another example of the word being used of believers by nonbelievers.

## **2. Followers Of The Way**

When the Saul of Tarsus was persecuting the Christians, he was looking for those who belonged to “the Way.” The Book of Acts records the following about Saul and his mission:

He requested letters addressed to the synagogues in Damascus, asking their cooperation in the arrest of any followers of the Way he found there. He wanted to bring them—both men and women—back to Jerusalem in chains (Acts 9:2 NLT).

The Christians were called “the followers of the Way” by unbelievers.

## **3. The Sect Of The Nazarenes**

The Jews called believers in Jesus, “the sect of the Nazarenes.” This is how they described the Apostle Paul:

For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5 NKJV).

This was a derogatory description of believers by unbelievers.

## **The Term Christianity Is Not Found In The New Testament**

Interestingly, we find that the term “Christianity” is not found in the New Testament. Its origin is usually traced back as far as Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 50-117). He used the term “Christianity” to distinguish the belief in Jesus from Judaism.

It is also fascinating to note that both terms “Christian” and “Christianity” originated in the city of Antioch where “Christian” was used by the unbelievers, while “Christianity” was used by believers.

This briefly sums up the various designations given to those who believe in Jesus.

### **Summary To Question 1: What Is A Christian?**

It is important that we know exactly what a Christian is. Simply stated, a Christian is a person who has trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior. However, it is not the common term used in the New Testament for those who believed in Jesus. In fact, it is only used once by Christians to describe who they are.

One of the more common terms used to describe Christians was “disciple.” Jesus’ disciples were those people who followed Him. The term is used of any group of people who follow a particular master.

Christians are also called “the elect.” This has the idea of certain people being “chosen.” The Bible makes it clear that God has chosen us to follow Him. We are thus “the elect of God.”

The term “believers” is another designation of those who followed Christ. They were “believers” in His promises, as well as believers in Him personally.

Those who trusted Jesus as their Savior are also recognized as “servants of Christ,” seeing that He was their Master. As servants, they obey the wishes of the Master.

Finally, the New Testament believers are also known as “saints.” This has the idea of those “set apart” for Him.

We also find several different ways in which unbelievers designated those who believed in Jesus. On two occasions, they are called “Christians.” In each of these occasions, the term was used in an uncomplimentary manner.

The Apostle Paul, before his conversion, persecuted this group known as the “followers of the Way.” Later, in the Book of Acts, unbelievers spoke of Christians as “the sect of the Nazarenes.”

Thus, we find the believers in Jesus were given a number of different designations by the unbelievers.

The term “Christianity” is not found in the New Testament. The earliest we can trace it is to a believer named Ignatius of Antioch.

The important thing to note is this: whatever those who believe in Jesus are called, whether it may be terms used by believers, or by unbelievers, it speaks of people who accept Jesus Christ for whom He claimed to be—the Savior of the world, and the only hope of humanity.

## Question 2

### How Does A Person Become A Christian? (Born Again)

The Bible says a person becomes a Christian by placing his or her faith in Jesus Christ. This is known as being “saved” or “born again.” We learn the following things from Scripture about what it means to be “born again.”

#### 1. A Person Must Be Born Again To Enter God’s Kingdom

The Bible teaches that no one can enter the kingdom of heaven unless they are born again. We discover this in the teachings of Jesus. He said the following to a religious leader named Nicodemus:

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3 ESV).

Unless one is born again, they cannot enter God’s kingdom.

Jesus then said to Nicodemus:

So don’t be surprised at my statement that you must be born again (John 3:7 NLT).

The New English Translation reads:

Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must all be born from above’ (John 3:7 NET).

Hence, being “born again,” or “born from above,” is absolutely essential to becoming a Christian. The old physical birth does not count—a person has to be born anew.

Jesus made the distinction between flesh and spirit—the physical birth and the spiritual birth:

What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit (John 3:6 NET).

Therefore, a spiritual birth is absolutely necessary to enter the kingdom of God.

#### 2. Faith Must Be Placed In Jesus Christ

To become born again, a person must put their faith in Jesus as their Savior. In other words, they must believe in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote to the Romans concerning what it takes:

But what does it say? “*The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart*” (that is, the word of faith that we preach), because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised

him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and thus has righteousness and with the mouth one confesses and thus has salvation (Romans 10:8-10 NET).

Jesus Christ, the eternal God who became a human being for a short period of time here upon the earth, died as a substitute for each of us. He paid the penalty for our sins.

Paul wrote the following to the church of Corinth about what Jesus did on behalf of us:

For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ (2 Corinthians 5:21 NLT).

Jesus became the offering for our sin. Consequently, we do not have to pay for our own misdeeds. He has paid the price. Accepting this fact by faith is what makes a person a Christian.

### **3. It Is An Act Of The Will**

To become a Christian requires an act of the will. We must personally choose to believe in Jesus. We read in the Gospel of John:

But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children (John 1:12 NET).

“Receiving Him” is another way of expressing belief in Him.

The Apostle Paul emphasized to the church at Ephesus that each believer had already personally trusted in Jesus. He wrote the following:

And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. (Ephesians 1:13 NLT).

When a person trusts Christ as Savior, they do so by their own choice. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter told the crowd what they must do:

Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38 NKJV).

It is the personal choice of the individual—whether it be to trust Christ or reject Him. Each of us must ultimately make that decision.

### **4. It Involves A Personal Relationship Between Us And God**

Becoming a Christian involves entering into a personal relationship with the Living God. Jesus emphasized this as He prayed to His Father on the night in which He was betrayed.

John records His words as follows:

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17:3 ESV).

Eternal life is defined for us here—it consists of knowing God through the Person of Jesus Christ. The moment an individual becomes a Christian they enter into an eternal relationship with God through Christ.

## **5. This Is An Eternal Transaction**

When a person trusts Jesus Christ, it is forever. The Bible is clear that those who believe in Jesus have life everlasting. John wrote:

The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him (John 3:36 NET).

There is no end to the relationship that the believer has with Jesus. We belong to Him for all eternity! Such is the good news of the gospel.

This briefly sums up what the Bible has to say about becoming a Christian.

### **Summary To Question 2: How Does A Person Become A Christian? (Born Again)**

It is important that we understand how a person becomes a Christian—a believer in Jesus Christ. The Bible is crystal clear on this matter. Unless a person is saved, or born again, they cannot enter God's kingdom.

Thus, it is crucial that we understand what it takes to become born again. According to Scripture, to experience the new birth, one must put their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior. This is an act of the will. Each person must individually choose to believe in Jesus.

Once this happens, they enter into a personal relationship with the One True God through the Person of Christ. The Bible emphasizes that this relationship is something that lasts forever. We become His for all eternity!

### Question 3

#### **Why Is It Necessary To Become A Christian? What Is Our Spiritual State Before Conversion?**

The Scripture says that a person cannot enter the kingdom of heaven without being “born again.” The reason human beings need to be born again is because of the desperate spiritual state all of us are in before believing in Christ. The Bible says the following about our miserable condition prior to putting our faith in Jesus Christ:

#### **1. We Are All Lost In Sin**

The Scripture pictures *all* humanity as being lost. Jesus stated that His purpose of coming to the world was to save the lost:

For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost (Matthew 18:11 KJV).

We were all lost.

#### **2. We Are Spiritually Blind**

The Bible also says that we are blind to spiritual things. Paul wrote to the church at Corinth about the spiritual blindfold that covers all unbelievers. He stated the following:

But if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. In their case, the god of this age has blinded the minds of the unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:3,4 CSB).

Those who do not know Jesus are spiritually blind to the truths of God. This blindfold must be removed for a person to be able to see things spiritually. Otherwise, they are in darkness.

In fact, the things of God are foolishness to unbelievers, they do not understand them. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. (1 Corinthians 2:14 NLT).

Unbelievers are not able to understand the things of the Spirit of God because these things are discerned spiritually.

#### **3. We Are Spiritually Dead**

We are not only called spiritually blind we are also spiritually dead. In other words, a person is dead spiritually before trusting Jesus Christ. This means

we are separated spiritually from God. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about their former state:

Once you were dead, doomed forever because of your many sins (Ephesians 2:1 NLT).

All of us who have believed in Jesus, and are now spiritually alive, were spiritually dead at one time.

#### **4. We Are Guilty Before God**

The lost world is guilty before God. Paul wrote:

Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God (Romans 3:19 NKJV).

Our guilt is real. We have sinned against a holy God. This means that each and every one of us deserves to be judged for our guilt. We deserve to pay the penalty for our own sin.

#### **5. We Have Been Condemned Because Of Our Sin**

In addition, all of us are born in a state of condemnation. John wrote that everyone is spiritually separated from God at the time of birth:

And anyone who believes in God's Son has eternal life. Anyone who doesn't obey the Son will never experience eternal life but remains under God's angry judgment." (John 3:18 NLT).

Paul testified what sin brings, death. He wrote the following to the Romans:

For the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23 KJV).

Therefore, unbelievers are in a continual state of death, or separation, from God. Consequently, we are not on trial in this life. Indeed, we have been tried, found guilty, and have been sentenced to execution.

#### **6. We Are Separated From God Because Of Our Sin**

Our sins have kept us separated from God. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about the state of unbelievers—that they are separated from God, and are darkened in their understanding of Him:

They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart (Ephesians 4:18 ESV).

Our sins have separated us from the living God.

Paul stated that each of us falls short of God's perfect standard. He put it this way:

For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard (Romans 3:23 NLT).

Every human being, who is born into this world, is lost in sin. In other words, we are born spiritually separated from God.

### **7. We Are Without Hope**

Apart from Jesus Christ, humanity has no hope. Paul wrote the following to the Ephesians about this truth:

Therefore remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh—who are called “uncircumcision” by the so-called “circumcision” that is performed in the body by hands—that you were at that time without the Messiah, alienated from the citizenship of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world (Ephesians 2:11,12 NET).

The condition of those outside of Jesus Christ is hopeless. Their only possible hope is to trust Him as their Savior. Otherwise, there is no hope.

### **8. We Are Enemies Of God**

All of us are God’s enemies prior to believing in Jesus. Paul wrote:

For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his son, how much more, since we have been reconciled, will we be saved by his life? (Romans 5:10 NET).

We are born at war with God.

### **Even Though This Was Our Condition, Christ Died For Us**

Yet, while we were His enemies, Jesus Christ died for us. This is terrific news! Paul wrote to the Romans about this wonderful truth:

Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful. (Romans 5:6-8 CEV).

Though Christ has died for us all, unbelievers are still presently the enemies of Christ. This, of course, will change the moment they place their faith in Him.

### **Summary To Question 3:**

#### **Why Is It Necessary To Become A Christian?**

#### **What Is Our Spiritual State Before Conversion?**

It is crucial for a human being to be “born again,” or “born from above.” Without the new birth, it is impossible for someone to go to heaven.

Scripture says that the reason why this is so is because of our spiritual condition when we enter the world—we are born with a sinful nature, separated from God.

The Bible says that humanity, apart from Jesus Christ, is in the following pathetic condition:

Our sinful condition has put us in a state of judgment or condemnation before God. There are no exceptions.

Furthermore, our sin brings guilt. We are all guilty before God. Guilt means we deserve judgment.

Therefore, the picture of the human race, apart from Jesus Christ, is without hope. We are a people guilty of sin, separated from God, and rightly deserving judgment. We truly are in a miserably spiritual condition.

As a result of the sinful condition with which we have been born, we are God's enemies. This is the bad news.

The good news, or gospel, is that Jesus Christ has died for us while we were His enemies. His death made it possible for us to have a relationship with God—a relationship which has been broken because of sin. Therefore, we do have hope! Hope is found in Jesus Christ. He can make us right with God.

## Question 4

### What Happens When A Person Is “Born Again?”

The Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, emphasizes the necessity of a spiritual rebirth. We must be “born again” to enter the kingdom of heaven.

In fact, there are many wonderful things which happen to the person once they have experienced this new birth. These include the following.

#### 1. The Believer Becomes A Child Of God

At the moment of our conversion, we become children of the living God. Paul wrote the following to the Galatians:

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26 NLT).

Every believer becomes a child of God once they place their faith in Jesus Christ.

John testified to the same thing. He wrote about what occurs when a person truly receives Christ as Savior.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name (John 1:12 NKJV).

Before our conversion, none of us were God’s children. Sin had separated us from Him. Once we believe in Him, then we become His child.

#### 2. The Believer Has A Right Standing With God

Our relationship with the Living God has been made right once we believe in His Son, Jesus Christ. Paul emphasized this fact when he wrote to the Romans:

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1 CSB).

We will not have to be punished for our sins because Christ took that punishment upon Himself at Calvary’s cross. There is now no condemnation for us. None!

#### 3. The Believer Is Indwelt By The Holy Spirit

Upon believing in Jesus Christ, we receive the Spirit of God in our lives. This is a promise of God. Paul wrote:

The Spirit is God’s guarantee that he will give us everything he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. This is

just one more reason for us to praise our glorious God (Ephesians 1:14 NLT).

The Holy Spirit is God's guarantee that we are His children. It assures us that the Lord will keep the promises which He has made to us.

In fact, our body is called a temple of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19,20 NLT).

God Himself, through the Holy Spirit, takes up residence inside of us.

John said that we reside in God, and He resides in us because of His Spirit. He put it this way:

By this we know that we reside in God and he in us: in that he has given us of his Spirit (1 John 4:13 NET).

The Holy Spirit lives inside of those who have trusted Him.

#### **4. The Believer Is A Member Of The True Church**

We are part of God's true church. This is made up of all who have believed in Him. Paul compared it to a human body:

For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body. Whether we are Jews or Greeks or slaves or free we were all made to drink of the one Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:13 NET).

Therefore, we belong to a universal group of believers who have trusted Christ as Savior. This is the biblical description of the New Testament church.

#### **5. The Believer Is Heir To All Things**

Believers are entitled to everything that God the Father has given to God the Son, Jesus. We are co-heirs with Him. Paul said:

And if children, then heirs (namely, heirs of God and also fellow heirs with Christ)—if indeed we suffer with him so we may also be glorified with him (Romans 8:17 NET).

The believers share the things of Christ because of what He has done on our behalf. All things are ours because we belong to Christ.

## **6. The Life Of The Believer Now Has Meaning**

Once a person becomes “born again,” they now have a genuine purpose for living. They know who they are, why they are alive, and what will happen to them when they die. The Apostle Paul realized this when he wrote:

For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day (2 Timothy 1:12 NKJV).

He “knew” in whom he had believed—the only true God. His life did not have genuine meaning until the time he trusted Jesus as his Savior. The same holds true for all of us.

## **7. The Believer Has God’s Protection**

Those who have trusted Christ as Savior have been promised the protection of God. God causes whatever happens to us to ultimately work for our own good. Paul wrote:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose (Romans 8:28 NKJV).

Although all things that happen to us are not good, the Bible says that eventually they will work together for the good. This is God’s great promise.

## **8. The Believer Is Complete In Christ**

The believer now stands before God as one who is complete. Indeed, we lack nothing. Paul emphasized this great truth when he wrote to the Colossians:

And you are complete through your union with Christ. He is the Lord over every ruler and authority in the universe (Colossians 2:10 NLT).

We are truly complete in Him.

## **9. We Have Everything That We Need**

Because we are complete in Christ, we have everything we need to live the Christian life. The Bible says God has given us all we need pertaining to life and godliness. Peter wrote:

By his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory and excellence (2 Peter 1:3 NLT).

God does not want believers to merely have a little religious area in their life. To the contrary, He wants to change every part of us from the inside out. Indeed, He has given us everything that we need to accomplish this.

This sums up some of the wonderful things which happen to us when we are spiritually reborn.

**Summary To Question 4**  
**What Happens When A Person Is “Born Again?”**

Many things happen to a person who believes in Jesus Christ. The Bible calls such a person “born again” or “saved.” Scripture says the following things happen to those who have a spiritual rebirth.

First, the person becomes a child of God. Previously, they were enemies with God. However, now they have a right standing. They belong to Him.

God Himself lives inside each believer through the Holy Spirit. Indeed, our bodies are called the “temple” of the Holy Spirit.

Those who believe in Christ are now members of the true church. The New Testament terms this the “body of Christ.”

Christians are also co-heirs with Jesus Christ in all things. This means that everything which is His, is now ours.

Believers also have a genuine meaning to their life. In fact, we know who we are, why we are alive, and what is going to happen to us when we die.

God has also promised to protect those who are His. He looks after His own. This should bring us a feeling of security. The living God is watching over us.

Believers are said to be “complete in Christ.” In other words, God has given us everything that we need to live a Christian life in this ungodly world. We do not lack anything.

These are some of the wonderful things which occur to those who have been spiritually reborn. Truly, great things happen when a person trusts Jesus Christ as Savior.

## Question 5

### What Are Some Of The Outward Signs Of A Person Being “Born Again?”

When a person becomes a Christian, there are a number of things that happen to them that demonstrate they are now spiritually alive. In other words, their life is not the same. Things change. These changes include the following.

#### 1. The Person Has New Desires

One of the signs that a person has been “born again” is that they now have a number of new desires—the believer now wants the same things that God wants. They enjoy the things of God because they are a new creation in Christ. Paul wrote:

So then, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; what is old has passed away—look, what is new has come! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NET).

The New Living Translation puts it this way:

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! (2 Corinthians 5:17 (NLT).

These new desires include a desire to read God’s Word, to pray to Him, to meet with other believers, and to tell others the good news about Jesus.

#### 2. There Is A Loss Of Desire For Sin

As well as the new desire to serve God, there is the loss of desire for a sinful lifestyle. The things that the person previously lived for are not important anymore. The Apostle Paul wrote:

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ (Philippians 3:8 NKJV).

We will lose our desire to sin against God when we come to Christ “in faith.”

#### 3. There Is An Understanding Of God’s Truth

Once a person becomes a believer, the truth of the Bible makes sense. Things about the plan of God, that were previously unclear, now become clear. The reason for Christ’s coming, His death, and His resurrection now make sense. This is why believers are commanded to study the Scripture. Paul wrote:

Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive his approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15 NLT).

Formerly, the believer could not see spiritual truth because of the spiritual blindfold that was placed over their eyes. Paul wrote:

If the Good News we preach is veiled from anyone, it is a sign that they are perishing. Satan, the god of this evil world, has blinded the minds of those who don't believe, so they are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News that is shining upon them. They don't understand the message we preach about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God (2 Corinthians 4:3,4 NLT).

This blindfold is removed when a person trusts Christ as Savior. Spiritual truth now can be clearly understood.

#### **4. There Is The Genuine Concern For Others**

The Christian also lives for others, not for self. The needs of others now become important. There is a new way of looking at humanity—the way Christ looks at them. The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Philippians:

Don't be jealous or proud, but be humble and consider others more important than yourselves. Care about them as much as you care about yourselves (Philippians 2:3,4 CEV).

This follows the example of Jesus. Matthew wrote about the purpose of Jesus' coming into the world:

Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28 NKJV).

Christ came to minister to others—He did not come into the world to be served by others. Jesus told believers how to be great in God's kingdom:

The greatest among you shall be your servant (Matthew 23:11 ESV).

To be great among believers, we must be the servant of others. True greatness comes through being a servant.

#### **5. There Is A Special Love For Other Believers**

One of the marks of a genuine Christian is a special love for other believers. Jesus said the following to His disciples on the night He was betrayed:

So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples (John 13:34,35 NLT).

People will know who genuine Christians truly are by the love they show to fellow believers. This is the mark of a Christian.

## **6. Believers Will Bear Spiritual Fruit**

In the parable of the sower, Jesus illustrated four types of responses to His message. However, only one of them bore mature fruit:

But other seed fell on good soil and it produced grain, some a hundred times as much, some sixty, and some thirty (Matthew 13:8 NET).

This refers to those who heard the message of Jesus, understood it, and believed it. They bore fruit. The Apostle Paul, writing to the Galatians, explained what spiritual fruit consists of. He put it as follows:

But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law (Galatians 5:22,23 NLT).

Those who believe in Jesus will have these qualities in their lives. Therefore, we should expect to see some outward signs of spiritual life from those who have trusted Him as their Savior.

### **Summary To Question 5**

#### **What Are The Outward Signs Of Being “Born Again?”**

Once a person has been saved, or born again, a number of changes take place. Scripture says that we pass from death to life. We have become new people in Christ.

We also find that there are a number of outward changes that give evidence that a person truly believes in Jesus.

To begin with, the genuine believer has new desires, and new interests. Bible study, prayer, meeting with other believers, and telling others about Jesus now become important factors in their lives.

The sins of the past do not control the life of the believer any longer. Believers realize they are to move forward with their lives because past sins have been forgiven and forgotten.

There is also a new understanding of God’s truth where previously there was none—the spiritual blindfold has been removed. We can see spiritual things clearly.

In addition, those who believe in Jesus have a genuine concern for others. Like the example we discover from the life of Jesus, the needs of others become important to us.

Moreover, there is also a special love for fellow believers. In fact, Jesus said that this is the mark of a Christian—the love we have for one another.

Finally, there are outward changes with the production of the fruit of the Spirit. True believers in Jesus should show some evidence of this in their lives.

Those who have been born again by the Spirit of God produce these qualities.

These are some of the outward signs which indicate a person knows Christ.

## Question 6

### What Are Some Misconceptions About The “New Birth?”

The “new birth,” or being “born again,” consists of placing one’s faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. However, many misconceptions have arisen around this important truth. These misconceptions need to be cleared up. The following things are what the “new birth” is not:

#### 1. It Is Not Coming To God Through Natural Birth

A person is not “born again,” or saved from their sin, through mere natural birth. While a person may have parents who are believers, this does not guarantee them a place in God’s kingdom. Each person must individually choose to trust Christ as Savior. The Bible makes this point very clear. Peter wrote the following:

For you have been born again. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God (1 Peter 1:23 NLT).

Natural birth will not bring a person into the kingdom of heaven. It is only the spiritual birth that accomplishes this.

#### 2. It Is Not By Our Own Effort

Furthermore, it is not our own effort which brings us into God’s kingdom. We had nothing to do with our physical birth. In the same manner, we have nothing to do with our spiritual rebirth. Being “born again” does not consist of one’s own self-effort. John wrote:

But to all who have received him—those who believe in his name—he has given the right to become God’s children—children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God (John 1:12,13 NET)

It is not merely the changing of a few habits—it is a spiritual rebirth. We become a new creation in Jesus Christ.

#### 3. It Is Not By Any Human Effort

No human effort whatsoever can cause someone to be born again. Only the Lord can bring this about. It is a supernatural work. Paul wrote:

He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins, giving us a new birth and new life through the Holy Spirit. (Titus 3:5 NLT).

Human effort cannot bring about salvation—it is a divine work from the beginning until the end.

#### **4. It Is Not A Mere Intellectual Understanding Of The Gospel**

Although a person may have an intellectual understanding of what it means to be born again, it does not mean that person has a relationship with God. The Bible says the following about demons:

You believe that God is one; well and good. Even the demons believe that—and tremble with fear (James 2:19 NET).

One may have correct theology, or belief system, but still be lost in sin. Indeed, the Lord Jesus defined eternal life as follows:

And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (John 17:3 ESV).

Eternal life is having a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ—it is not merely understanding a few facts about God.

#### **5. It Is Not Self-Improvement**

No amount of self-improvement can cause the “new birth.” Becoming better people, who give up a few bad habits, does not save us. No matter how good we are, we will never be good enough. The Lord has told us what He thinks of our own self-righteous deeds:

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away (Isaiah 64:6 NLT).

The translation filthy rags refer to menstrual cloths. The New English Translation puts it this way:

We are all like one who is unclean, all our so-called righteous acts are like a menstrual rag in your sight. We all wither like a leaf; our sins carry us away like the wind (Isaiah 64:6 NET).

The point is that our good works are lifeless—they show no sign of life being conceived.

Therefore, no matter how good we are, we are all short of God’s perfect standard. The Bible makes this abundantly clear. Paul wrote:

For all have sinned; all fall short of God’s glorious standard (Romans 3:23 NLT).

All of us have come short of God’s perfection. There are no exceptions to this.

## 6. It Is Not A Physical Change

When a person is reborn spiritually, there is not a physical change that comes with the experience. Although people may change their appearance, or have a different look to them, the actual change is spiritual, not physical.

The change is on the inside, not the outside. The Lord told the prophet Samuel that God looks on the inward, not the outward appearance. We read the following:

But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart (1 Samuel 16:7 NLT).

The change has to do with our heart—our innermost being.

## 7. Being Born Again Is Not A Process

Being “born again” is not a process that happens over a period of time. It is an instantaneous event that takes place the moment a person trusts Christ. The Bible stresses the fact that “now” is the time of salvation:

For he says, “I heard you at the acceptable time, and in the day of salvation I helped you.” Look, now is the acceptable time; look, now is the day of salvation! (2 Corinthians 6:2 NET).

Salvation is immediate.

We find that Jesus promised the criminal, who was dying next to Him on the cross, that he would immediately be in paradise. We read the following in Luke:

Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom.” And Jesus replied, “I assure you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:42,43 NLT).

There is no need to wait. Salvation is instantaneous.

## 8. It Is Not Being Religious

The new birth has nothing to do with a person being religious. Church membership, confirmation, receiving communion, and being baptized are absolutely worthless unless one has had a true experience with Jesus Christ. The Lord has made it clear what He thinks of empty religious celebrations.

The prophet Amos records him saying:

I absolutely despise your festivals. I get no pleasure from your religious assemblies (Amos 5:21 NET).

Religious gatherings can be worthless. Religion does not save—only Jesus Christ saves.

This illustrates some of the main misconceptions surrounding the new birth. It is important that we do not embrace any of them. Instead, we need to have a biblical idea of what it means to be “born again.”

**Summary To Question 6:  
What Are Some Misconceptions About The “New Birth?”**

The “new birth,” or being “born again,” is an important biblical doctrine. Therefore, it is crucial to have a correct understanding of this subject from the perspective of Scripture.

Unhappily, there are a number of common misconceptions about the new birth that are held by Christians, and non-Christians alike.

First, the new birth does not come about by natural descent. It is a spiritual birth, not a physical birth.

Furthermore, no one enters the kingdom of God because one of their parents may have been a Christian. The fact that our parents may be believers has nothing to do with our own situation. We must make our own choice. Neither can one become a believer by his or her own self-effort. In fact, no human effort is involved in the salvation process. The salvation experience is entirely a work of God. We cannot work our way into God’s favor—it is His free gift to us.

Moreover, becoming a Christian is not a mere understanding of a few facts. It is having a personal relationship with the Living God. While the intellect is involved, the salvation experience concerns more than the intellect.

Neither is salvation from sin some type of self-improvement. Indeed, we can never improve ourselves to the place where we become acceptable to God. We are lost in sin and need a Savior—Jesus Christ. This is the only way in which we can become born again. Becoming a Christian does not involve any outward physical change—it is a spiritual change. God does not change how we look—He changes our heart—our innermost person.

In addition, salvation is not a process, but rather something that happens instantaneously. Scripture emphasizes that “today” a person can be saved. It can happen now!

Finally, becoming a Christian does not mean the person becomes religious. We do not acquire a list of “do’s and don’ts.” Instead, we begin an eternal relationship with God. This relationship begins the moment we trust Him. Furthermore, it never ends!

This sums up some of the common misconceptions about being “born again.” It is essential that we understand what the Bible has to say on the subject so that we can correct any wrong ideas we may have.

## Question 7

### **What Should Be The Proper Response Of The Believer For What God Has Done For Them?**

God has done many wonderful things for the believer through Jesus Christ. Consequently, there are a number of obvious ways that the believer should respond. This includes the following:

#### **1. We Should Give Our Life To Christ In Service**

First, our life should be given to Jesus Christ for His service. The Bible says:

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is (Romans 12:1,2 NLT).

It is only reasonable, or natural to give our life to Christ for the things that He has done on our behalf. Indeed, since He has done everything for us, serving Him is not too much to ask. This is certainly a reasonable request.

#### **2. We Should Keep His Commandments**

There is something else. If we truly love Jesus, we will keep all of His commandments. Jesus said the following to His disciples:

The person who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and will reveal myself to him" (John 14:21 NET).

We should show our love for the Lord by keeping His commandments.

#### **3. We Should Continually Praise And Worship Him**

Realizing what Christ has done on our behalf should cause the believer to be engaged in continual praise, prayer, and worship. The Apostle Paul encouraged the church at Thessalonica to do the following:

Always rejoice, constantly pray, in everything give thanks. For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NET).

When we understand the things that the Lord has done for us, our reasonable response should be a lifestyle of praise and worship.

These are three simple things which we can do to show our love for Him.

**Summary To Question 7:  
What Should Be The Proper Response Of  
The Believer For What God Has Done For Them?**

Jesus Christ has done so much for us. Thus, we need to properly respond to Him. We find that there are three basic responses that the believer should have in return for what Christ has done on our behalf.

First, we should turn every aspect of our life over to Him. Our bodies should be a living sacrifice offered to Him in His service. We are not our own—we belong to Him.

Next, we should keep His commandments. Jesus said that if we love Him, then we would obey what He commanded. This includes all of His commandments—not merely the ones that we feel like obeying at the time.

Finally, our lives should be continually praising and worshipping God for all that He has done for us. This is certainly not too much to ask when we consider all that He has done for us.

## Question 8

### What Difference Does Being A Christian Make In A Person's Life?

Once a person becomes a Christian, what difference does it make in their life? Is there any change in the individual who trusts Christ?

The Bible says it makes a big difference, a huge difference, to those who become believers. These include the following things:

#### **It Answers The Three Basic Questions About Life**

If the Christian faith is true, then it gives humanity the answers to the three basic questions about life: Who am I? Why am I alive? What will happen to me when I die?

#### **1. We Now Have An Identity: We Know Who We Are**

Jesus Christ solves our identity problem. Humans need no longer wonder who they are. We now realize that we are created in the image of an all-powerful, personal God—we are not some evolutionary accident.

We read in the Book of Genesis about the creation of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve:

So God created human beings in his own image. In the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (Genesis 1:27 NLT).

The Contemporary English Version puts it this way:

So God created humans to be like himself; he made men and women. (Genesis 1:27 CEV).

God's image means that we have certain things in common with Him. They include the ability to think, love, and communicate.

Because He has created us with these abilities, we also have the chance to know the One True God.

We now understand that human beings are special—special to God. This gives us an explanation as to exactly who we are.

#### **2. We Now Have A Purpose: We Know Why We Are Here**

Along with identity, comes a genuine purpose for living. Instead of living life without any real purpose, we can now know the reason we have been created. We have been created to love God, and to enjoy Him forever.

Jesus Christ has provided the answer to what our purpose is here upon the earth. We not only know who we are, we know *why* we are here. Therefore,

as His disciples, we want to tell others the good news about Jesus. Christ Himself commanded:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19,20 NET).

We do not have to be concerned about our purpose in life—for we now know what it is. We know why we are here upon the earth.

### **3. There Is A Destiny That Awaits Us: We Know Where We Are Going**

Finally, Jesus provides us with an answer about our future—our destiny. We now understand that this life is not all there is. We are beings made for eternity, and belief in Jesus Christ allows us to spend eternity in the presence of God.

Therefore, the grave has no ultimate terror for us because we know there is a better existence beyond this life. Belief in Jesus gives us a destiny to which we can look forward. Jesus said:

In a little while the world will no longer see me, but you will see me. Because I live, you will live too (John 14:19 CSB).

In the letter of First John, we read the following:

Dear friends, we are already God's children, but he has not yet shown us what we will be like when Christ appears. But we do know that we will be like him, for we will see him as he really is (1 John 3:2 NLT).

Consequently, when people die in Jesus Christ we do not sorrow as those who have no hope. Paul wrote to the Thessalonians:

And now, dear brothers and sisters, we want you to know what will happen to the believers who have died so you will not grieve like people who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13 NLT).

We do experience genuine sorrow for those who have died. This is natural. But our sorrow is not a hopeless sorrow. Indeed, there is genuine hope in Jesus Christ.

As we can see, being a Christian makes a big difference. We now have an identity, a purpose, and a destiny.

### **Summary To Question 8: What Difference Does Being A Christian Make In A Person's Life?**

Some people mistakenly believe that being a Christian is all about the future—what will happen in the next life. Consequently, it is not that relevant here in this life.

However, nothing could be further from the truth. Christianity is not irrelevant to our lives here upon the earth. In fact, becoming a Christian makes a big difference in a person's life right here and now. This can be seen in three important ways.

First, people who become Christians now know *who* they are. Indeed, they realize that they are not an accident of evolution but rather a being created in the image of God. We are here by design—not by blind chance.

We also know *why* we are alive—we have a purpose in life. As believers, we have a personal relationship with the living God. Part of our purpose on this planet is telling others the good news that they too can have this relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, our life has meaning. We are here for a reason.

Finally, we know our destiny. Death, though a reality, is not something to be feared. To the contrary, it brings believers into the presence of the Lord. Therefore, while there is sorrow for those who have died, there is not the same sorrow that unbelievers experience. Christians have genuine hope that the next life will bring something better.

Therefore, being a Christian makes all the difference in the world.

## Question 9

### What Responsibilities Does A Christian Have?

Becoming a Christian involves responsibility. Indeed, there are several things in which all believers in Jesus Christ should participate. They include the following.

#### 1. We Are To Read And Study The Bible – The Word Of God

To begin with, the believer should read and study the written Word of God—the Bible. The Bible is God’s communication to us. Paul wrote about this to Timothy:

Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16 NET).

The psalmist wrote of the necessity of thinking, or meditating, on what God has said to us:

How happy is the one who does not walk in the advice of the wicked or stand in the pathway with sinners or sit in the company of mockers! Instead, his delight is in the Lord’s instruction, and he meditates on it day and night (Psalm 1:1,2 NIV).

By reading and studying the Bible we can know exactly what God requires of us. It is our guidebook—it tells us how we are to live in this world.

#### 2. The Believer Should Pray

When we read the Bible, it is God talking to us. On the other hand, prayer is our talking to God. Jesus had this to say regarding the importance of prayer:

Now he told them a parable on the need for them to pray always and not give up (Luke 18:1 CSB).

We are to pray always.

#### We Are To Worry About Nothing: Pray About Everything

The Apostle Paul stated it this way:

Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God (Philippians 4:6 CSB).

We want our relationship with God to be a two-way relationship. He talks to us through His Word, and we talk to Him by means of prayer. There is constant communication.

### 3. The Believer Should Assemble With Other Believers

There is something else we must do. The Bible commands believers to meet with one another. The writer to the Hebrews said:

And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage and warn each other, especially now that the day of his coming back again is drawing near (Hebrews 10:25 NLT).

Gathering together with other believers is necessary so that we can draw encouragement from one another. Indeed, we desperately need each other.

### 4. The Believer Should Tell Others The Good News

Finally, it is the responsibility of the believer to tell others the good news about the Lord. The Gospel according to Matthew closes with these commands of Jesus:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20 NET).

The message of forgiveness of sins, through Jesus Christ, is too wonderful to keep to ourselves—we must tell others. This is why the Lord commanded believers to go into all the nations of the world and to make disciples.

#### **Summary To Question 9:**

#### **What Responsibilities Does A Christian Have?**

The Christian, while here upon the earth, has been given a number of responsibilities. Indeed, there are four basic things that all believers should do.

First, we should let God speak to us through His Word. The Word of God is our instruction manual—our guidebook—about how we are to get through this life. It is God talking to us. Second, we should speak to Him in prayer. As He talks to us through His Word, we talk to Him through prayer. This way we can have a genuine conversation with the Lord.

Third, we should meet with other believers on a regular basis. This is important because we need to draw strength and support from other Christians. We are in a battle, and we must continue to meet with those who are in our spiritual army. Finally, we should tell others the good news about Jesus Christ. Jesus commanded us to do this. We are to let people know the good news about forgiveness of sin that is offered by Christ. The message is too great to keep to ourselves.

It is important that all believers practice these four things, for these are important responsibilities which the Lord has given to each of us.

## Question 10

### **Does A Person Have To Be Religious To Be A Christian?**

One of the things that stops people from becoming a Christian is the notion that he or she will have to become religious. For most people, this has negative connotations.

However, Christianity is not a religion! Rather it is a relationship with the living God. There are a couple of important points that need to be made in dealing with this issue.

#### **1. Religion Has Rituals And Rules**

Religion consists of rituals and rules—things people must do and other things they must not do. However, Christianity, though it has rules to follow, is basically a relationship between humanity and the Creator. When one becomes a Christian, they enter into a personal relationship with the living God through Jesus Christ. Jesus Himself said:

This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent — Jesus Christ (John 17:3 CSB).

Becoming a Christian is a personal matter. It is not merely a set of laws and rules. It is a relationship between the living God and those who believe in Him. Thus, at its heart, Christianity is relational.

#### **2. The Bible Condemns Empty Religious Behavior**

The Bible condemns, in the strongest of terms, religion that is without any genuine substance. Jesus had the following to say to the crowds concerning the religious leaders of His day:

The teachers of religious law and the Pharisees are the official interpreters of the Scriptures. So practice and obey whatever they say to you, but don't follow their example. For they don't practice what they teach. . . How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs--beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. You try to look like upright people outwardly, but inside your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness (Matthew 23:2,3,27,28 NLT).

Jesus' strongest words of condemnation were against the religious leaders of His day. Their hypocrisy was exposed.

Scripture also informs us what true religion should be. It is living out what you believe. James wrote:

Religion that pleases God the Father must be pure and spotless. You must help needy orphans and widows and not let this world make you evil (James 1:27 CEV).

Therefore, contrary to popular belief, a Christian is not someone who is religious. A Christian is one who has a vital relationship with the living God through Christ.

### **Summary To Question 10**

#### **Does A Person Have To Be Religious To Be A Christian?**

Religion is not something which is attractive to most people. This word conjures up the idea of rituals and rules. It consists of things a person must follow. Often these rules are obeyed without any sense of personal satisfaction, or fulfillment. It is merely something which someone does.

In that sense of the word, Christianity is not a religion. Rather, Christianity is a relationship with a living person—Jesus Christ. It is not a dead religion, or a list of rules someone blindly obeys. When a person becomes a Christian, they enter into a personal relationship with the living God through Jesus.

In fact, the Bible condemns empty religious rituals. Jesus had His harshest words to say against those who outwardly practiced religion, but had no relationship with God. Empty religion is not the mark of a genuine Christian. Therefore, a Christian is not someone who is religious—rather they are people who have a loving relationship with their Creator.

## Question 11

### Does Christianity Consist Of A List Of Negative Commandments?

As one reads the Bible, there seems to be plenty of commandments that tell us what *not* to do. Contrary to many misconceptions, being a Christian is not mainly following a list of don'ts. From a study of Scripture, we learn the following:

#### There Is Freedom In Jesus Christ

First of all, when one becomes a Christian, a believer in Jesus, that person becomes truly free. Jesus made this clear. He said:

So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free" (John 8:31,32 ESV).

The truth of Christ sets us free. Jesus also said:

Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed (John 8:36 NKJV).

Christians are no longer slaves to sin. They have the freedom to do the things that are pleasing to God. This freedom did not exist before they believed in Christ.

#### There Are Some Negative Commandments In Scripture

Scripture does contain negative commandments for the believer. There are reasons for this—protection and provision. We can make the following observations.

##### 1. They Are For Our Protection

God gives negative commandments to protect the believer. As loving parents will give negative commandments to their child, our loving heavenly Father does the same thing. This is because He loves us and wants to protect us from the effects of sin. Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the importance of being ignorant with respect to evil things:

Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults (1 Corinthians 14:20 NIV).

As believers, we are to be innocent in the ways of evil. Consequently, the Lord gives us negative commandments so that we will keep away from sin. Peter wrote:

And God, in his mighty power, will protect you until you receive this salvation, because you are trusting him. It will be revealed on the last day for all to see (1 Peter 1:5 NLT).

These negative commandments are for a specific purpose. God does not merely give them because He wants to rob us of our enjoyment of life.

## 2. They Are For Our Provision

Another reason for negative commandments is provision. God wants to bless His people, but this can only occur when they are obedient. This is why there are negative commandments in Scripture—He wants to provide the best for us. Consequently, He warns us of things that will not be for our own good.

We find that He has promised to supply all of our needs through Christ Jesus. Paul the Apostle wrote to the Philippians:

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19 NKJV).

Peter emphasizes that Jesus has given us everything we need:

His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness (2 Peter 1:3 NIV).

God wants to provide for our needs. Sometimes this involves telling us what we should not do, as well as what we should do.

Therefore, it is our responsibility to obey His commandments, both positive and negative, to live a godly life.

### Summary To Question 11:

#### Does Christianity Consist Of A List Of Negative Commandments?

The Bible contains negative commandments. There is no doubt about this. However, we should not conclude that Christianity consists of being a negative faith. It is rather a positive relationship with the Living God through the Person of Jesus Christ.

When God gives us negative commandments, it is because He has our best interest in mind. Basically, there are two reasons as to why He gives them.

First, the commandments are given to protect us. God wants to keep us from sin. As parents give commandments to their children to look out for them, our heavenly Father gives commandments to protect His children. He always has our best interest in mind.

In addition, the negative commandments are meant to provide for us. God wants the best for each believer. Often times this means giving a negative commandment for our own good. We need to realize this.

Consequently, while Christianity is not centered around a set of negative commandments, there are certainly things, as Christians, which we should not be doing.

## Question 12

### **Why Do We Have To Play By God's Rules?**

If we accept the fact that the Bible gives us God's rules for living our lives, we are faced with the following question: Why must we play by God's rules? Why can't we make up our own rules?

There are a number of important points that should be made when answering this question. They are as follows:

#### **1. God Created The Universe**

The Bible says that the God of the Bible is the Creator of the universe. Scripture says:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1 KJV).

When God created the universe, He established certain laws. We are all bound by these laws. If we break them, then we will suffer the consequences.

For example, if we do not eat, drink and breathe, then we will die. There is no alternative. We cannot expect to survive if we break these physical laws that God has set in motion.

#### **2. God Has Created Us**

There is something else. God not only created the physical universe; He also created the human race. The psalmist wrote:

Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture (Psalm 100:3 NIV).

As the One who designed us, He knows what is best for us. Therefore, He tells us what we should do, as well as what we should not do.

#### **3. God Established Moral And Spiritual Laws To Govern The Universe**

God has also established moral laws that humanity must obey. Like the physical laws that we must follow, these moral commands are for our own good. When we disobey these laws, or ignore them, we will have to suffer the consequences.

We must emphasize that our heavenly Father has established all of His laws—physical, moral and spiritual—for our own good. He knows what is best for us. Therefore, we should willingly obey the rules which He has set down.

#### **4. Only God Knows What Is Best For Us**

The idea that only God knows what is best for us is illustrated in the Old Testament story of Job and his three friends. They were attempting to decide how God should run the universe. After their long discussion, the Lord finally broke into the discussion with His own comments.

Scripture records Him saying the following:

Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind: “Who is this that questions my wisdom with such ignorant words? Brace yourself, because I have some questions for you, and you must answer them” . . . “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell me, if you know so much” (Job 38:1-4 NLT).

The Lord then asked Job a number of questions concerning the actual running of the physical universe. Of course, Job could not answer His questions.

The point is this: if Job did not know how God operated the physical universe, then what makes him think that he can tell God how to operate the moral universe? Obviously, he could not.

We find the same idea in a statement that Jesus made. He said:

If I have told you about earthly things and you don't believe, how will you believe if I tell you about heavenly things? (John 3:12 CSB).

Ultimately, we do not know what is best for us. The Lord is the only One who knows this. Therefore, we need to trust Him.

#### **5. We Miss The Best In Life When We Ignore God's Laws**

Rebelling against God, and disregarding His commands, means that humanity will miss the best things in life—the things that God has planned and offered to each and every individual.

The psalmist spoke of the destiny of those who rebel against God:

Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. “Let us break their chains,” they say, “and throw off their fetters.” The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them (Psalm 2:1-4 NIV).

Judgment awaits those who rebel against God.

Consequently, we find that there are a number of reasons as to why we should play by the rules which God has set down.

**Summary To Question 12:  
Why Do We Have To Play By God's Rules?**

Scripture says that God has set down rules which we must obey. Why must we play by God's rules? There are a number of reasons as to why this is so. We can sum them up as follows.

To begin with, He created the universe and its laws. Therefore, He is the only One who knows how the universe is to run. God, and God alone, understands what is necessary.

Second, the Lord God has made us. Again, only He knows what is best for humanity seeing that He is our Creator.

Third, God has established moral and spiritual laws in the universe. Like the physical laws which He has established, these moral laws are for our own good.

In sum, God knows what is best for us in every realm. When we break or ignore God's laws, we suffer the consequences.

### Question 13

#### **Why Do So Many People Have An Unattractive Picture of Christianity?**

While there are countless religions in the world, only the Christian faith is the true belief system of the One God who exists. In other words, God's divine truth can only be found in Christianity.

Unfortunately, many people have an unattractive picture about Christianity. Why is this so if Christianity is the true faith?

Basically, it is due to both the actions of Christians, or people who call themselves Christians, as well as the perception by unbelievers of what the Christian life is all about. There are a number of things that contribute to this.

#### **1. There Are Human-Made Traditions**

All Christian groups have their traditions. Unfortunately, some traditions have been elevated to the place where they are made to be equal with Scripture. This is tragic because people cannot separate the human-made things from the divine commands of God.

During the time of Jesus, the distinction between God's commandments and human-made traditions had become blurred. This had caused confusion among the people. Hence, Jesus denounced the unbiblical traditions of His day. We read the following account in Matthew:

Then Pharisees and experts in the law came from Jerusalem to Jesus and said, "Why do your disciples disobey the tradition of the elders? For they don't wash their hands when they eat." He answered them, "And why do you disobey the commandment of God because of your tradition?" (Matthew 15:1-3 NET).

We must not allow our human-made traditions to be placed on the same level as God's Word. When we do this sort of thing, we confuse people as to what is required from God, as well as what is not.

#### **2. Believers Often Promote Practices That Are Not Found In Scripture**

The Bible stresses that believers are to be holy. However, many Christians have a wrong idea of holiness. Usually this consists of a list of negative commandments. Almost always, these commandments are not found in Scripture, but are rooted in someone's idea of what a Christian should be. Unfortunately, many people consider themselves righteous because of the things they do *not* do.

The remedy to this approach is to search the Scripture and find out what it says on the matter. Indeed, the Bible is the *only* source of Christian

teaching. It alone tells us how a Christian is to behave. Consequently, God's Word should test everything:

Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the need to test, or examine, all things:

Do not treat prophecies with contempt. But examine all things; hold fast to what is good (1 Thessalonians 5:20, 21 NET).

He is talking about spiritual matters. Everything should be examined. Only those things which are true should be embraced.

In like manner, John the Apostle told the believers to test the spirits. He wrote.

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1 NKJV).

Therefore, it is the responsibility of the Christian to test *everything* by God's Word. The Bible, the written Word of God, is our standard of what we are to believe, and how we are to behave. All things need to be tested by it.

### **3. There Are False Believers Who Lead People Astray**

There is also the matter of people who claim to be Christians but who are not Christians at all. History provides us with many examples of so-called "Christians" who did not live Christ-like. Jesus warned us of these people ahead of time:

Be careful of false prophets. They come to you looking gentle like sheep, but they are really dangerous like wolves (Matthew 7:15 NCV).

These false prophets appear outwardly to be sheep. In other words, they act like believers and talk like believers. However, they are not. Inside they are like savage wolves. We need to beware of them.

The Apostle Paul also warned us of false prophets. He wrote the following to the Corinthians:

For such people are false apostles, deceitful workers, masquerading as apostles of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:13 NIV).

Consequently, we should not always believe that someone is a Christian merely because they have told us so. There has to be a life that backs up the claim.

### **4. There Is The Issue Of Hypocrisy**

There is also the matter of hypocrisy. Examples can always be found of individuals who profess to be believers in Jesus Christ, yet their conduct is hypocritical. These people say one thing, but they do something else.

Jesus had very strong words for those who claimed to know Him, but practiced hypocrisy. We read them in Matthew's gospel:

How terrible for you, teachers of the law and Pharisees! You are hypocrites! You close the door for people to enter the kingdom of heaven. You yourselves don't enter, and you stop others who are trying to enter (Matthew 23:13 NCV).

Instead of looking at a hypocrite, we should look at Jesus Christ—there was no hypocrisy in Him.

Therefore, the existence of hypocrites should not bother us. Indeed, we should expect to find them among professing Christians. However, we should not be looking to them, but rather to Jesus. The writer to the Hebrews said:

Since we are surrounded by so many examples of faith we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially sin that distracts us. We must run the race that lies ahead of us and never give up. We must focus on Jesus, the source and goal of our faith. He saw the joy ahead of him, so he endured death on the cross and ignored the disgrace it brought him. Now he holds the honored position—the one next to God the Father on the heavenly throne (Hebrews 12:1-2 God's Word).

Our eyes should always be placed upon Him, not upon others. He will not disappoint us.

This sums up some of the reasons as to why people have an unattractive picture of the Christian faith. We should note that it has nothing to do with Jesus Christ, but it has everything to do with people who claim to follow Him.

To keep from having this unattractive picture, one only needs to look at Jesus. His beautiful character is there for all to see!

**Summary To Question 13:  
Why Do So Many People Have An  
Unattractive Picture Of Christianity?**

Since the Christian faith is God's true faith, or belief system, which He has given to the world, we would expect that it would seem attractive to everyone. Indeed, it gives people the answers to their deepest questions. Our identity, purpose, and destiny are all answered through Jesus Christ.

Unhappily, there are many people who do not have a positive view of Christianity. Instead it appears to be extremely unattractive to them. There are a number of reasons as to why this is so.

First, there are the human-made traditions that people add to Scripture. This consists of beliefs and teaching which have not been revealed by God. While these beliefs may be added with the best of intentions, it makes Christianity something that it was not meant to be.

Often, people place human-made beliefs on the same level as Scripture. This causes all sorts of problems. Indeed, those who do not understand the difference between what God has revealed, and what humans have added to the faith, become confused. They are not certain what genuine Christianity truly consists of. This confusion makes Christianity unattractive and confusing to those on the outside.

Not only are many beliefs and teachings wrongly added to Christianity, we also find certain behavior is now expected of Christians—behavior which the Bible does not command.

Believers are thus expected to be practicing certain things that have no biblical basis. These types of practices present such an unattractive, and non-biblical, picture of Christ and Christianity. Again, the result is confusion.

What we are to believe, and how we are to behave, has been clearly revealed to us in Scripture. We have no right to add to what God has said. He alone tells us what to believe, as well as how to behave.

Add to this, there are false believers who profess to be Christians, but really are not. They purposely distort the Christian message. From these false prophets, and false teachers, people get a view of Christianity which is wrong.

Finally, there is the issue of hypocrisy in the lives of believers. Their lives do not match what they say they believe. They give the Christian faith a bad name. It is certainly not difficult to find many examples of hypocrisy among professing believers.

However, instead of looking at a hypocrite, one should look at Jesus. He was not a hypocrite. To get a true picture of Christianity, one must look at Him—He is the only One who will not disappoint.

All other people eventually will. In fact, this type of behavior is the very thing Jesus warned about and condemned.

All of these things contribute to the unattractive picture that people have about the faith.

## Question 14

### **Are Christians Better Than Non-Christians?**

Sometimes Christians give the impression that they are somehow *better* people than non-believers. But this is not the case. Indeed, the Bible makes this very clear. From Scripture, there are a number of important truths that we learn about this topic.

#### **1. Believers Are Saved By God's Grace, Not Their Own Good Deeds**

By definition, a Christian is one who admits that he or she cannot make it to heaven on their own. Paul wrote:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV).

The translation God's Word puts it this way:

God saved you through faith as an act of kindness. You had nothing to do with it. Being saved is a gift from God. It's not the result of anything you've done, so no one can brag about it (Ephesians 2:8-9 God's Word).

It has been said that the ground at the cross is level. No one gets to heaven because they are better than anyone else. We are all saved by God's grace.

#### **2. Our Righteousness Cannot Please God**

No matter how good we are, our deeds of righteousness, our good works, cannot please God. Isaiah described the people of Israel as follows:

We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweep us away (Isaiah 64:6 NLT).

The problem with human beings is that we often compare ourselves to others. We do not look so bad when we make this comparison. We look around at other people, and then we assume that we are much better than most of them.

However, God does not compare us with other people—He compares us with Jesus Christ! Therefore, we all fall short of His standard of perfection. Paul wrote:

For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard (Romans 3:23 NLT).

All of us come short of God's perfection. None of us can begin to compare with Jesus.

### 3. **Pride Is Something That God Hates**

Another problem is pride. Thinking that we can please God by our own goodness makes the situation worse. The Bible says that God hates pride:

There are six things the LORD hates. There are seven things he cannot stand: a proud look (Proverbs 6:16,17 NCV).

The Contemporary English Version puts it this way:

There are six or seven kinds of people the LORD doesn't like: Those who are too proud or tell lies or murder (Proverbs 6:16,17 CEV).

Pride is detestable to the Lord. He hates it.

We also find that Jesus condemned the proud attitude of the religious leaders of His day. It seems that they practiced their religion only to get the attention of others. He gave the following warning to His disciples:

Whenever you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, because they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward (Matthew 6:5 CSB).

We are not to behave like them. The situation with the patriarch Abraham puts the issue of pride, or good works, into perspective. Paul wrote:

Was it because of his good deeds that God accepted him? If so, he would have had something to boast about. But from God's point of view Abraham had no basis at all for pride (Romans 4:2 NLT).

None of us have *anything* to boast about. People are Christians because they have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior. Instead of thinking that they were good enough to get to heaven on their own, they have reached out to God and asked for His mercy.

We are saved completely by God's grace. There is nothing which we can add to it.

We again cite Ephesians 2:8,9:

I mean that you have been saved by grace through believing. You did not save yourselves; it was a gift from God. It was not the result of your own efforts, so you cannot brag about it (Ephesians 2:8,9: NCV).

Consequently, there is nothing to the idea that Christians are somehow better than the non-Christian. Nothing whatsoever!

**Summary To Question 14:  
Are Christians Better Than Non-Christians?**

Sometimes the impression is given that the Christian is, in some sense, better than the non-Christian. However, this is certainly not the case.

Indeed, the only difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that the believer has recognized their unworthiness. They realize they cannot have a relationship with God, or make it to heaven, on their own merit.

Hence, they call upon the Lord to save them. This does not make the person better than the non-Christian. It makes the Christian one who has understood his or her unworthiness.

Any Christian who thinks that he or she is better than a non-believer really does not understand the situation. Indeed, there is no room for pride among Christians. It is only through God's mercy that any of us are saved.

This is done so that none of us can brag or boast—for we have nothing to boast about. We are Christians because of Christ, not because of ourselves.

Consequently, it is a huge mistake to assume that we are somehow better people than non-Christians. We are not.

## Question 15

### What Is A Saint?

The word “saint” is a translation of a Greek word meaning “holy one.” Contrary to popular belief, all believers in Jesus Christ are saints—even though they may not always act in a saintly manner.

The word saint refers to someone who is sanctified, or set apart, to God. A saint is *not* a sinless person as some mistakenly think.

The Bible says the following:

#### 1. All Believers Are Saints

The Bible teaches that everyone who has believed in Jesus Christ is a saint. Paul addressed the church at Rome in the following manner:

To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints (Romans 1:7 CSB).

All the believers in Rome were saints.

Paul addressed his letter to the “saints” in Corinth:

Paul, called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Sosthenes our brother: To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours (1 Corinthians 1:1-2 CSB).

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to a church that was steeped in sin. In fact, he said the following words to them:

Now, dear brothers and sisters, I appeal to you by the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won’t be divisions in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose (1 Corinthians 1:10 NLT).

Though the Corinthian believers were committing gross sin, Paul still called all of them “saints.” Therefore, saints are not a special class of believers which are recognized by some religious authority—all believers are saints.

#### 2. A Convert Is Immediately Set Apart To God

The Bible says that at the precise moment that a person is saved God separates them from the world, and sets them apart unto Himself. They become a saint. The writer to the Hebrews said:

With one sacrifice he made perfect forever those who are being made holy (Hebrews 10:14 NCV).

Christians have become separated from the world, and are now set apart to God. We are saints.

### 3. We Are Not Called “To Be” Saints

It is important to understand that Christians already *are* saints—they are not called “to be” saints. Some Bible translations have unfortunately given the impression that Christians are called to be saints.

For example, we read in the *King James Version* the following introduction to the letter to the Romans:

To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints (Romans 1:7 KJV).

The King James Version translates the introduction to First Corinthians as follows.

Paul, called *to be* an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes *our* brother, Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours (1 Corinthians 1:1-2 KJV).

However, this is not what the original Greek says. They are called “as saints,” or are “saints by calling.” Nowhere is any believer encouraged to become a saint. Only God can make a saint. Most modern translations correct this. For example, the New English Translation says:

Paul, called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by God’s will, and Sosthenes our brother: To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours. (1 Corinthians 1:1-2 NET).

We are saints by calling—we do not become one later in our Christian life by reaching some stage of spiritual maturity.

### 4. Believers Should Walk Worthy Of Their Calling

Believers have a high calling. Indeed, we are God’s people, His representatives here upon the earth. This truth is consistently set forth in the New Testament.

Therefore, Christians are told to walk worthy of their saintly calling. Paul wrote the following to the church at Rome concerning a Christian woman named Phoebe:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church in Cenchreae. So you should welcome her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints and assist her in whatever matter she may require

your help. For indeed she has been a benefactor of many—and of me also (Romans 16:1-2 CSB).

The Contemporary English Version puts it this way:

I have good things to say about Phoebe, who is a leader in the church at Cenchreae. Welcome her in a way that is proper for someone who has faith in the Lord and is one of God's own people. Help her in any way you can. After all, she has proved to be a respected leader for many others, including me (Romans 16:2 CEV).

Believers are never told to strive to become saints. To the contrary, they are to live according to the position and calling they already have.

Therefore, as saints, each and every one of us should make it a priority to walk worthy of our calling. In other words, we need to put into practice who we are, God's saints.

**Summary To Question 15:  
What Is A Saint?**

There is a misconception that only a special class of Christians will eventually become saints. Yet, this is not what the Bible says.

The moment that a person trusts Jesus Christ as Savior they become a saint. Indeed, they immediately become set apart to God for His service. This is what the word "saint" means.

Accordingly, there is no justification for singling out special individuals for sainthood. There is no biblical justification for believers becoming saints—or for any earthly church authority to grant sainthood to an individual who has done special work for the Lord. All believers are saints.

Since all of us who believe in Christ are saints, we ought to live up to our heavenly calling.

## Question 16

### What Is A Hypocrite?

Often times Christians are spoken of as “hypocrites.” In fact, this is a designation this is typically used of people who claim to know Jesus. Are all Christians hypocrites? What exactly is meant by the word hypocrite?

There are a number of important points we must make as we seek to answer this question:

#### **Hypocrite Defined**

It is imperative that we correctly define a hypocrite, or hypocrisy. A hypocrite can be defined as “one who puts on a false face.” They say one thing, but they do something else.

How then are we to understand the issue of Christians and hypocrisy? Should we assume all Christians are hypocrites who say they believe certain things, but do not live in accordance with those beliefs?

#### **1. Not All Christians Are Hypocrites**

To begin with, there are many people who profess to be Christians but are nothing but hypocrites. No one denies this.

It is also true that genuine believers have their moments of hypocrisy. However, this does not give the unbeliever any excuse to reject the Christian faith.

Indeed, while all Christians are sinners, not all Christians are hypocrites. Those who have trusted Christ as Savior, and have allowed the Holy Spirit to work in their lives, are not hypocrites. They are examples of sinful people who have had a change of behavior in their lives. This change has been taking place since the time they believed in Jesus.

Granted, they are certainly not everything that they should be, but they are not what they used to be. In a sense, their lives are “in progress.” In fact, the Bible speaks of this as spiritual growth. Each believer is at his, or her, own unique level of spiritual growth.

In addition, many of the so-called hypocrites among Christians are not Christians at all. They are counterfeits. While they claim to believe in Jesus and follow Him, they have no relationship with Him whatsoever. Consequently, we should not confuse hypocrites, which claim to be Christians, with genuine Christians. There is a world of difference.

#### **2. Jesus Condemned Hypocrisy**

There is something else that we must understand. Scripture condemns hypocritical behavior in the strongest of terms. In fact, the Lord Jesus saved

His harshest denunciations for the hypocrites of His day—the religious leaders.

He said the following to these hypocrites with whom He constantly battled:

How terrible it will be for you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you won't let others enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and you won't go in yourselves (Matthew 23:13 NLT).

Notice Jesus said that these people, these hypocritical religious leaders, were not going to enter the kingdom of heaven! Furthermore, neither were they permitting others to enter into the kingdom. Jesus had the authority to make such judgments. He made it clear that their hypocrisy was detestable in the sight of the Lord. Hence, they would be punished.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave a vivid illustration of hypocrisy. This picture concerns people who point out certain sins in others, but overlook these same sins when they themselves are committing them:

You can see the speck in your friend's eye, but you don't notice the log in your own eye. How can you say, "My friend, let me take the speck out of your eye," when you don't see the log in your own eye? You're nothing but show-offs! First, take the log out of your own eye. Then you can see how to take the speck out of your friend's eye (Matthew 7:3-5 CEV).

This illustration of Jesus points out the hypocrisy of the people who act in this particular way. The faults they see in others are faults which they themselves have. Yet they are blind to their own faults. This is hypocrisy.

We also find that when Jesus healed on the Sabbath, the leader of the synagogue accused Him of sin. Jesus rebuked his hypocrisy. Scripture records the incident as follows:

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, "There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath." The Lord answered him, "You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" When he said this, all his opponents were humiliated, but the people were delighted with all the wonderful things he was doing (Luke 13:14-17 NIV).

Hypocrisy is something that Jesus despised. Thus, we too should despise hypocrisy.

### 3. Jesus Christ Was Not A Hypocrite

The key thing to understand is that Jesus Christ was not a hypocrite. When the religious leaders sent their guards to arrest Jesus, they came back empty-handed. The guards were asked why they did not arrest Him:

“We have never heard anyone talk like this!” the guards responded (John 7:46 NLT).

No one has ever talked like Jesus—no one has ever acted like Jesus. He is the standard that everyone should be looking to—not hypocritical Christians. The Bible makes it clear that He has never sinned:

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit (1 Peter 3:18 NIV).

There was no hypocrisy in the life of Jesus. None.

### 4. Jesus Christ Is The Standard: He Is The One We Look To

Therefore, we should look to Jesus for the ultimate standard of how to behave. The writer to the Hebrews said:

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God (Hebrews 12:1-2 NET).

Consequently, Christians, and non-Christians alike, should look at Jesus—not the behavior of sinful human beings. If they do this, then they will find a Person in whom there is no hypocrisy.

#### **Summary To Question 16: What Is A Hypocrite?**

A hypocrite is a person who wears a false face. It is someone who says one thing, but actually does something else. Christians, as a group, are often accused of being hypocrites—of being phonies. They claim to believe one thing, but they behave contrary to what they say they believe. This hypocrisy supposedly covers all Christians.

Consequently, many people conclude that Christianity is a gigantic fraud merely because they have known Christians who are hypocrites.

This accusation, while often made, is simply not true. A number of things must be stated.

For one thing, it is wrong to say that *all* Christians are hypocrites. While all Christians sin, and do things that are inconsistent with their faith, this does not mean they are hypocrites.

Indeed, there are countless Christians who live consistently with what Jesus taught. They do not live “double-lives.” In other words, while they are still sinners, they are doing their best, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to follow the commands of Christ. These people should not be called hypocrites.

We do find that there are professing Christians who are hypocrites. Of course, it is possible that these people are not true believers in Jesus, but only claim to be such. On the other hand, there are genuine believers who act inconsistently, or hypocritically, with what they say they believe.

Jesus warned about such hypocrisy. Indeed, we find a number of instances in the four gospels where Jesus confronts hypocrisy.

Moreover, His strongest words were against those religious leaders, those hypocrites, who said one thing, but did something else. He rebuked them for their behavior.

The real issue is not how professing Christians act—it is how Jesus Christ acted. There was nothing hypocritical in His life. He never sinned. He is the standard by which everyone, and everything, should be judged.

Therefore, the truth of Christianity is not based upon the behavior of professed Christians—it is based upon what Jesus Christ said and did. His life was consistent from beginning to end. There was no hypocrisy in it at all!

## Question 17

### **What Is The Difference Between The Standing And The State Of The Believer? (Our Position In Christ)**

Scripture says that the relationship of believers to Jesus Christ is in three basic tenses—past, present, and future. These three relationships have to do with the various aspects of our salvation—they are extremely important to understand.

To begin with, believers in Christ have been justified, or declared right with God. This occurred the very moment we trusted the Lord. Presently, we are being sanctified, or set apart, for God's service. Eventually we will be glorified. At that time, we will receive a new body, a perfect body.

#### **1. There Is A New Standing Because Of Jesus: We Are Justified Before God**

The moment a person is saved, or born again, they enter into a new relationship with God. Their standing, or position, is one of a child of God. They are justified, or made right, with God.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the immediate benefits of this new relationship with Jesus Christ:

We are writing to the church of God in Corinth, you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did all Christians everywhere— whoever calls upon the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and theirs. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you his grace and peace. I can never stop thanking God for all the generous gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. He has enriched your church with the gifts of eloquence and every kind of knowledge. This shows that what I told you about Christ is true. Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. He will keep you strong right up to the end, and he will keep you free from all blame on the great day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will surely do this for you, for he always does just what he says, and he is the one who invited you into this wonderful friendship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:2-9 NLT).

This act of justification occurs by God's grace, and by it alone.

Furthermore, it is unchangeable for all eternity. The weakest believer in Jesus Christ has the same standing as the strongest. Everyone who has trusted Christ is on equal ground in his or her position in Christ.

Paul wrote about another benefit of being justified, or declared righteous:

Therefore, since we have been declared righteous by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1 NET).

The believer is at peace with God through their relationship with Christ.

In another place, he told the Galatians that all of them were children of God through their faith in Jesus Christ:

So you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:26 NET).

This is the new standing for those who have believed in Christ.

### **There Is No Condemnation For Those Who Believe In Jesus**

To the Romans, Paul stressed the truth that there is no condemnation for those who have believed in Jesus Christ. He wrote.

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1 NLT).

No condemnation whatsoever for believers, none!

Peter said believers in Christ have been called out of darkness and into light:

But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9 NKJV).

We are now in the light—not in the darkness.

Hence, all Christians have this new relationship with God—a relationship which occurred the moment they were converted.

## **2. The Present State Of The Believer Has To Do With Their Daily Relationship: Sanctification**

The first stage of salvation, justification, is an act that has taken place in the past. The present state of the believer has to do with their *daily* relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This is known as sanctification, or being “set apart” for the Lord.

The believer in Jesus Christ has been forgiven for all their sins—they are a new creation in Christ:

If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a new creation. The old things have gone; everything is made new! (2 Corinthians 5:17 NCV).

Christians, therefore, should conduct their lives according to who they are “in Christ.” In fact, Scripture commands believers to walk worthy of their calling:

As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received (Ephesians 4:1 NIV).

Daily, we are to walk with the Lord in a manner that is worthy of our calling.

### **Believers Should Practice Their Position In Christ**

Therefore, the believer needs to practice their position in Christ. In other words, we should live in a Christ-like manner. In fact, Jesus prayed that those who believed in Him would live a life that would be set apart to God:

Set them apart in the truth; your word is truth (John 17:17 NET).

When we do not live up to our calling, we are disciplined. The writer to the Hebrews compared the discipline of earthly fathers to that of our heavenly Father:

They disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, in order that we may share in his holiness (Hebrews 12:10 NIV).

The discipline from the Lord is meant to keep us conducting our lives in a consistent manner.

Paul wrote about how the church will eventually be presented blameless before God:

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself for her to make her holy, cleansing her with the washing of water by the word. He did this to present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or anything like that, but holy and blameless (Ephesians 5:25-27 CSB).

Therefore, all believers should desire to live up to their holy calling.

### **3. The Believer Will Eventually Have A New Body: Glorification**

The final step in the salvation process will occur when a believer enters into the presence of the Lord. At that time, they will receive a new body. Indeed, the believer will eventually be changed when Jesus Christ comes again. This is known as glorification. John wrote the following:

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2 NKJV).

This mortal body will be changed into something immortal. Paul wrote the following to the church at Corinth:

I will explain a mystery to you. Not every one of us will die, but we will all be changed. It will happen suddenly, quicker than the blink of an eye. At the sound of the last trumpet the dead will be raised. We will all be changed, so that we will never die again. Our dead and decaying

bodies will be changed into bodies that won't die or decay (1 Corinthians 15:51-53 CEV).

This is the wonderful future that awaits all believers.

In sum, every believer in Jesus Christ that has been saved, or justified, is presently in the process of being set apart for God, sanctification, and eventually we will be forever in His presence, glorification.

**Summary To Question 17:**

**What Are The Various Relationships Of The Believer To Jesus Christ? (Our Position In Christ)**

The Christian is actually saved in three different tenses—past, present, and future. Every believer has a right standing before God through his or her position in Jesus Christ. This past act is known as justification.

They are saved by God's grace and are accepted in Christ. This is an eternal standing that cannot change.

This present state of salvation is known as sanctification. This is where each believer is being set apart for the cause of Christ. The key is to live up to our position in Christ.

Finally, all believers will be perfected in the future state. It is known as glorification. Someday our bodies will be transformed from mortal to immortal, from corruptible to incorruptible.

This is the glorious truth of Scripture about the believer's "position in Christ."

## Question 18

### What Is Spiritual Growth?

All people understand what it means to grow physically and mentally. There is no doubt about this.

The Bible says that those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior also grow spiritually. The fact that believers do grow spiritually is taught in the Scripture. There are a number of ways in which we grow in a spiritual sense. We can cite them as follows:

#### 1. Believers Grow In Love

The Apostle Paul spoke about the believers growing in their love. He wrote the following to the Philippians:

I pray that your love for each other will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in your knowledge and understanding (Philippians 1:9 NLT).

The love of the believer toward others should increase. This is one way in which we grow spiritually.

#### 2. We Grow In Grace And Knowledge

Simon Peter wrote about growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. He put it this way in his second letter:

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen (2 Peter 3:18 NIV).

Believers are to learn as much as they can about the Lord. It is a growing process—a learning process.

#### 3. We Are Able To Grow In Faith

Growth in one's faith is also possible. Paul wrote the following to the Thessalonians:

We ought always to thank God for you, brothers and sisters, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love all of you have for one another is increasing (2 Thessalonians 1:3 NIV).

Our faith needs to grow—to increase.

The disciples of Jesus asked Him to increase their faith. We read about this request in Luke's gospel:

And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith” (Luke 17:5 NKJV).

We should ask the Lord the same thing. We should desire our faith in Him to increase.

#### **4. The Believer Should Grow In Every Spiritual Way**

The goal for the believer is to grow in all spiritual aspects. Paul wrote to the Ephesians about this necessity:

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ (Ephesians 4:15 NIV).

Paul emphasized that all believers should conduct their lives in a way that is pleasing to God. He wrote the following to the Thessalonians:

Finally, dear brothers and sisters, we urge you in the name of the Lord Jesus to live in a way that pleases God, as we have taught you. You are doing this already, and we encourage you to do so more and more (1 Thessalonians 4:1 NLT).

We should desire to please God in every way. Indeed, in *every* way.

In the Book of Proverbs, it speaks of the path of the righteous getting brighter and brighter. It reads as follows:

The path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, shining brighter and brighter until midday (Proverbs 4:18 CSB).

The more we know the Lord, and experience His guidance, the brighter our path will become. This is a vivid illustration of spiritual growth!

Therefore, believers are to walk worthy of the calling of God, which is in Christ Jesus. Paul wrote the following to the Colossians:

Then the way you live will always honor and please the Lord, and you will continually do good, kind things for others. All the while, you will learn to know God better and better (Colossians 1:10 NLT).

We have this challenge before us—to walk worthy of the calling of the Lord. Consequently, we must grow in all aspects of our spiritual life.

#### **5. Growing Believers Should Be Bearing Spiritual Fruit**

Jesus spoke of believers bearing spiritual fruit:

Every branch in me that does not produce fruit he removes, and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce more fruit (John 15:2 CSB).

Believers are to be “fruit-bearers.” Paul explained what this consisted of. He wrote the following to the Galatians:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23 NET).

The Contemporary English Version puts it this way:

God’s Spirit makes us loving, happy, peaceful, patient, kind, good, faithful, gentle, and self-controlled. There is no law against behaving in any of these ways (Galatians 5:22-23 CEV).

These qualities should be in the life of every Christian. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, this is what we should attempt to produce.

## **6. Spiritual Growth Is To Be Done With Humility**

All spiritual growth should occur with a humble attitude. James stressed this when he wrote to the believers:

He gives us more and more strength to stand against such evil desires. As the Scriptures say, “God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble” (James 4:6 NLT).

Therefore, as we grow in grace, we should also grow in humility.

This sums up some of the important truths which the Scripture teaches about spiritual growth.

### **Summary To Question 18: What Is Spiritual Growth?**

Christians are said to grow spiritually. Indeed, spiritual growth is something that all believers should experience. This occurs in a number of ways. First, we grow in our love for others. Jesus is our example here. His love was demonstrated to us in that He gave Himself for others. We are to do the same. Our emphasis should not be on our own needs, but rather the needs of others. This is one way in which we grow spiritually. We also grow in our knowledge of the Lord, and in His grace. This comes through diligent study of His Word. As we learn more about Him, we will grow spiritually. Faith is another area in which believers grow. The more we get to know the Lord, the more our faith should increase. Jesus’ disciples asked Him to increase their faith, and we should do likewise. In fact, believers are to grow in all spiritual aspects. Since we will never reach spiritual perfection in this life, there will always be room for growth. Spiritual growth can be observed by the bearing of spiritual fruit. There are certain spiritual fruits which are produced when one matures as a Christian.

Above all, Christian growth is to be done with an attitude of humility. We are to resist evil, and humble ourselves before the living God. When we do this, He will lift us up.

## Question 19

### How Can Someone Be Certain They Are A True Believer?

Can a person really know if he, or she, is a genuine child of God? The answer is “Yes.” There are a number of ways in which an individual can know if they are truly saved. They include the following:

#### 1. God’s Word Says So

To begin with, a person can know that they are a true believer because the Word of God says so!

John wrote the following to the believers in his day so that they could *know* that they had eternal life. He put it this way:

The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life (1 John 5:12-13 CSB).

Based upon the authority of God’s Word, a person can know if they are one of God’s children. If a person has trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, then the Word of God says they are saved. The issue is settled.

#### 2. There Is Peace In Their Heart

There is also personal confirmation which the Lord gives to His own people. One of the ways God assures us of our salvation is the peace which He gives to those who believe. Paul wrote to the Philippians:

And the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7 NET).

This peace is something that surpasses all human understanding—it is a supernatural peace. Those who believe in Jesus experience such a peace. It is an inward testimony that we do indeed belong to Him.

#### 3. Believers Have A New Life

In addition, those who have trusted Christ enter into a new life. Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians:

Some of you used to be like that. But now the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the power of God’s Spirit have washed you and made you holy and acceptable to God (1 Corinthians 6:11 CEV).

Our actions and attitudes change when we trust Christ. We are not the same people that we used to be. We have been spiritually reborn.

#### **4. We Love Other Believers**

Those who have trusted Christ will express their love for other believers. John put it this way:

We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our fellow Christians. The one who does not love remains in death (1 John 3:14 NET).

The mark of a true believer is the love we show for fellow believers. This is one of the ways in which we know that we have believed in Him.

#### **5. There Is The Confirmation Of The Holy Spirit**

The Bible says the Holy Spirit gives confirmation to us that we are His children. Paul wrote the following to the church at Rome:

For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children (Romans 8:16 NLT).

God the Holy Spirit confirms the truth of God in our hearts.

The Apostle John wrote about the testimony that is in the heart of each believer. He stated it in the following manner:

He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son (1 John 5:10 NKJV).

The Holy Spirit confirms this truth in our hearts. He lets us know that we belong to Jesus.

#### **6. There Is Hatred Of Sin**

One clear mark of the Christians is a genuine hatred of sin. Sin becomes something we detest. Paul wrote to the Romans:

For sin will not rule over you, because you are not under the law but under grace (Romans 6:14 CSB).

While Christians still commit sin, they should hate sin, and hate the idea that they have committed sin. Sin was our former master. However, now we have a new Master—the Lord Himself. We do not need to serve the old master.

#### **7. Believers Are To Love The Good**

Those who have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior will love that which is good. The Bible encourages us to hate evil, and love the good. The prophet Amos said:

Hate evil and love what is good; turn your courts into true halls of justice. Perhaps even yet the LORD God of Heaven's Armies will have mercy on the remnant of his people (Amos 5:15 NLT).

The child of God will love things that are good. Indeed, since we serve a good God, we should love the things which He loves.

In sum, a person can indeed be certain whether or not they are a true believer in the Lord.

**Summary To Question 19:  
How Can Someone Be Certain They Are A True Believer?**

How can a person have assurance that they are truly a child of God? Is it really possible to know if we do indeed belong to the Lord? The answer is a resounding, "Yes!" We can know. A number of points need to be made.

First, we can be certain that we are God's children because the Bible says so. If a person believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, then according to the Bible, they are saved. They can *know* they have eternal life. This is something which God's Word promises. It is not a "hope so," or a "think so." Rather it is a, "know so." We can know!

There are also other things that come along with salvation. There is the supernatural peace of God in a person's life. This inner peace passes all human understanding. It is one of inward confirmations that we have been born again. The attitudes and actions also change when someone believes in Jesus. We look at life differently because we are viewing things through our new spiritual eyes. Formerly, they were spiritually blind, but now they can see!

In addition, there is a genuine love for our fellow believers. According to Jesus, this is how the people of the world will know we are believers. It will be the love we as Christians demonstrate one for another. There is something else. God, the Holy Spirit, confirms in our hearts that we are His children. His Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we belong to Him.

Finally, there is the love of all things good. Since God is good, we are to love the things He loves—the good things. In addition, with salvation, also comes a holy hatred for sin. We are new people in Christ. The old life, with its old desires, has passed away. Our focus is now on new things—the things of Christ. Thus, we are to love the things which He loves, and hate the things which He hates.

When these things are evident in a person's life, it is the mark that they are a true believer in Jesus Christ.

However, the key is belief in Jesus. If a person, by faith, trusts Christ as Savior, then they are His child. This act alone is what saves the lost sinner.

## Question 20

### **What Are The Different Ways In Which Believers Are United With Christ?**

As believers in Jesus Christ, we are united with Him in a number of different ways. Indeed, Scripture says there are a number of ways in which Christians are linked with Christ. They include the following.

#### **1. We Have Been United Together With Christ In Death**

To begin with, believers have been united with Jesus Christ in His death on the cross. Paul wrote the following to the Romans:

For if we have been united with him in the likeness of his death, we will certainly also be in the likeness of his resurrection (Romans 6:5 CSB).

When He died, we died with Him. We are one with Him in death.

#### **2. Believers Have Been Made Alive With Christ In His Resurrection**

Not only are we united with Jesus in His death, we are also united together with Him in His resurrection life:

But God was merciful! We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive with Christ, and God's wonderful kindness is what saves you (Ephesians 2:5 CEV).

This is a wonderful truth! We have this resurrected life because of Jesus Christ.

Paul also wrote to the Colossians about how the Lord has made us alive in Christ:

You were dead, because you were sinful and were not God's people. But God let Christ make you alive, when he forgave all our sins (Colossians 2:13 CEV).

We are alive in Christ.

#### **3. Christians Are Raised Together With Jesus**

Thirdly, we are also raised to a new position in the heavenly realm because of Christ. Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

He also raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavens in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6 CSB).

Those who have believed in Jesus Christ have been raised together with Him, and are seated with Him in heaven. Our position is in heavenly places in Christ. What a wonderful truth this is!

#### **4. We Work For Him On The Earth**

The work of the ministry is something that we do for Jesus:

Now because we are fellow workers, we also urge you not to receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1 NET).

Believers are united in the fact that we work together for the cause of Christ.

#### **5. Believers Will Live Forever Together With Him**

We will also live forever and ever together with Jesus Christ. Paul emphasized this as he wrote to the Thessalonians:

Christ died for us, so that we could live with him, whether we are alive or dead when he comes (1 Thessalonians 5:10 CEV)

There is the hope of living forever with Christ. This is another way in which we are united with Him.

#### **6. We Will Be Glorified Together With Him In The Future**

Finally, as joint-heirs with Jesus, we will share together in His glory. Paul wrote the following to the Romans:

If we are his children, we are also God's heirs. If we share in Christ's suffering in order to share his glory, we are heirs together with him. (Romans 8:17 God's Word).

The things which belong to Jesus Christ will now belong to us because, by faith, we are His children. Eventually, we will be glorified with Him.

These six ways in which the believer is united together with Jesus Christ, illustrate some wonderful truths of God's Word.

#### **Summary To Question 20: What Are The Various Ways In Which Believers Are United With Christ?**

Jesus Christ has done many things on behalf of the believer. The Bible tells us of six ways in which the Christian is united with Christ.

First, the Word of God says that we have died together with Him on the cross. When He died, we died.

However, He did not remain dead. Jesus came back to life, to a resurrected life. In the same way, those who have died with Him are also raised with Him. In other words, we have resurrection life because of Jesus Christ.

He brought us together with Him to His heavenly position. As Christ is presently seated in the heavenly realm, so are those who believe in Him. This position is something that is continuing. Presently, believers work together for Him in the ministry. While it is His ministry, we have the honor of doing His work here upon the earth.

Someday, believers will live together with Him in heaven. We will be face-to-face with Him forever and ever.

There will also come a day when we share in His glory. The things which are His, will become ours—because we have trusted in Him.

These are six wonderful truths of Scripture. They explain how believers are united with our risen Lord.

**Part 2:  
God's Plan For Our Lives**

In this second section of the book, we will examine the topic of the plan of God for the lives of believers.

Does God actually lead His people? If so, then in what ways does He lead us? Does He have a specific plan for each of our lives? How can we find this plan? What practical things can we do in making major decisions for our life?

These are some of the important issues that we will cover in this section.

## Question 21

### **Has God Predetermined Every Event In Our Life?**

One often-asked question concerns our destiny, and how it relates to the actions of God. Is God manipulating us? Do we have choice in the decisions that we make, or is God pulling the strings? What does the Bible have to say?

It is important to understand that Christians have different views on how to answer this question. They are as follows.

#### **Option 1: We Have Genuine Choice**

The first option sees God as giving humans genuine choice—He is not micro-managing every aspect of our lives.

Indeed, the Bible teaches that we do have a genuine choice concerning how we should behave. Consequently, God is *not* manipulating our lives. The Scripture presents many situations where the people had a choice to serve the true God, or to serve false gods.

#### **Joshua Told The People To Choose The Lord**

Joshua, the leader of Israel, said the following to the people:

But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15 NIV).

Note that Joshua told the people to choose whom they are going to serve. This indicates genuine choice.

#### **Elijah Assumed The People Had A Choice In Whom To Serve**

The prophet Elijah contested the false prophets of the god Baal. This is another instance where Scripture assumes the people have choice:

Elijah stood up in front of all the people and asked them, “How long will you try to have it both ways? If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal is God, follow him.” The people didn’t say a word (1 Kings 18:21 God’s Word).

Elijah told them to choose whom they would serve. Obviously, they had the ability to make a choice between the Lord and Baal.

### **Peter Believed The People Could Choose**

We find an example of this in the New Testament. Peter wrote that it is the desire of the Lord that people choose to place their faith in Him:

The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9 NIV).

This statement says the Lord is waiting for the people to choose. Again, the impression is that they have genuine choice.

Each of these statements indicate people have genuine choice. Therefore, we have a responsibility to act in faith toward God.

### **Jesus Said We Can Choose To Follow Him**

The Scripture also teaches that we have a choice whether to follow Christ, or not to follow Him.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He wept over the city:

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:41 NIV).

A few days later, Jesus said the following:

Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing. Look, your house is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord’ (Matthew 23:37-39 NIV).

Two things stand out here. First, Jesus cried over the city for not receiving Him as their Messiah. If they had had no choice in the matter, then His weeping would have been a charade.

Second, He said clearly that He often wanted to gather the people to Himself—but they *would* not allow Him to do this—not that they *could* not do this.

What this implies is they had a genuine choice to either accept or reject Him. Unfortunately, they chose to reject Him.

### **God Holds Us Accountable For Our Decisions**

The idea that we have genuine choice is found elsewhere in Scripture. For example, the Bible says that God holds those accountable who reject His Word:

And all who believe in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them (John 3:36 NLT).

From these biblical examples, we observe that God holds humanity responsible for the choices we make. If God were merely manipulating us in everything that we do, then it would not make sense to hold us responsible for our actions.

Because we are held accountable for our deeds, it is clear that we are not being manipulated. We are free to choose our own way in this life. Consequently, genuine choice is ours.

### **There Is A Judgment Coming**

When we stand before the Lord in judgment, we will have to answer for what we have done here on earth. Those who have trusted Christ will not have to answer for their sins—seeing they have been forgiven.

Those outside of Christ will have to pay the penalty for rejecting Him. The Bible always assumes these people have a choice, and they have chosen to reject Him. It is on that basis that they will be judged.

### **Option 2: God Has Predetermined Every Move We Make**

There are also Christians who reject the idea that God has given human beings legitimate choice. They believe if God is truly God, then He must control everything which occurs. This includes the choices we make. Whether we choose good or bad, ultimately it is God who caused us to make the choice.

### **The Problem With This Position**

The obvious problem that arises with this perspective is that God would be responsible for evil, which is contrary to what the Scripture teach about Him. Indeed, James wrote the following:

When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed (James 1:13,14 NIV).

This is why most Christians believe that God has given believers some type of freedom, but cannot exactly agree on what that is. This seems to be the best way to understand what the Bible teaches on the subject of human choice and human responsibility.

In sum, we are able to make choices in this life, and the Lord will hold us responsible for the choices that we make. In other words, we cannot blame anybody but ourselves for the choices that we do make.

**Summary To Question 21:  
Has God Predetermined Every Event In Our Life?**

Do we have genuine choice, or is God manipulating every area of our life? Scripture seems clear that humans have been given a genuine choice in how we are going to act.

Indeed, the actions we perform, and the choices that we make, are our own. Therefore, we cannot blame God for the choices that we make.

In fact, the Bible teaches that God will hold us personally accountable for the choices that we make. We find a number of examples of this in Scripture.

For one thing, Joshua called on the people to choose whom they would serve. This assumes they could make the choice.

The prophet Elijah said that the people had to choose between serving the Lord, and serving the false god Baal. This is another illustration of the fact that believers have genuine choice.

Simon Peter said that the Lord *desires* people to repent. He does not make them repent! Repentance involves a decision on our behalf—choice. Thus, we do have choice.

In addition, Jesus cried over Jerusalem because the people “chose” to reject Him. He said they were unwilling to believe in Him.

The fact that He wept over the unbelief of the city is certainly a clear example of the choice which they had. Denying genuine choice to humans is really a denial of humanity.

While there are those who believe that God manipulates every move we make, this position cannot really be held consistently. Otherwise, God is made directly responsible for all evil. This is not how the Bible pictures Him.

Consequently, from beginning to end, the Scriptures teach that each of us has a choice, and that we are responsible for the choices that we make.

## Question 22

### **Does God Have A Plan For Our Lives?**

God does indeed have a plan for our lives. Concerning all of humanity, God has willed several things. They include the following:

#### **1. God Desires That All People Are To Become Christians**

The Bible says that God wants everyone to be saved—He wants every single person to come to faith in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote about this to Timothy:

This is good and pleases God our Savior. He wants all people to be saved and to learn the truth (1 Timothy 2:3,4 God's Word).

So, what keeps people from being saved? It is their own unbelief—their own choice. It is not God's choice!

We also find that He is slow to judge unbelievers because He wants them to repent:

The Lord isn't slow to do what he promised, as some people think. Rather, he is patient for your sake. He doesn't want to destroy anyone but wants all people to have an opportunity to turn to him and change the way they think and act (2 Peter 3:9 God's Word).

The Lord would like everyone to believe. This is His desire for each of us.

#### **2. There Is Human Stubbornness Involved**

Therefore, it is not God that keeps people from being saved, but rather humanity's stubbornness to believe God's promises. Though it is God's desire that everyone believe in Christ as Savior, we can thwart that desire by rejecting Him.

When he was about die by stoning before an angry crowd, the martyr Stephen spoke of the people of Israel resisting God's Spirit:

You stubborn and hardheaded people! You are always fighting against the Holy Spirit, just as your ancestors did. Is there one prophet that your ancestors didn't mistreat? They killed the prophets who told about the coming of the One Who Obeys God. And now you have turned against him and killed him. Angels gave you God's Law, but you still don't obey it (Acts 7:51-53 CEV).

God's Holy Spirit can be resisted by sinful humanity. Still, God wants everyone to come to know Him.

### **3. God Does Have A Plan For Believers**

Scripture is clear that God does have a plan for those who believe in Him. The Bible says the following:

God's secret plan has now been revealed to us; it is a plan centered on Christ, designed long ago according to his good pleasure. And this is his plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ—everything in heaven and on earth. Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us from the beginning, and all things happen just as he decided long ago (Ephesians 1:9-11 NLT).

The Bible says that God does have a plan, a roadmap for Christians. There are a number of things which Scripture says about His plan.

#### **God's Plan Is Good**

For one thing, we discover that the plan of God for our lives is a good plan. Paul wrote to the Romans:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what *is* that good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2 NKJV).

God's plan for us is good. This is important for us to know, and to understand. Indeed, He has good things planned for us.

#### **God Wants Christians To Be Like Christ**

For Christians, God's desire is that we should be like Him. He has told us that someday we will be made like His Son:

For God knew his people in advance, and he chose them to become like his Son, so that his Son would be the firstborn, with many brothers and sisters (Romans 8:29 NLT).

Ultimately, we shall be like Jesus Christ. This does not mean that we will be God, or have any of the exact same attributes as God. He is the Creator, while we are the created ones. Any abilities that we may have, He has given to us. The Bible makes this very clear.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

Who says that you are any better than other people? What do you have that wasn't given to you? If you were given what you have, why are you bragging as if it weren't a gift? (1 Corinthians 4:7 God's Word).

He wants us to remember from where all of our gifts come from. They are from Him and Him alone! Thus, there is no reason as to why we should boast about anything.

## **Christians Are To Bear Spiritual Fruit**

Finally, it is God's will for all Christians that they be useful—they should bear spiritual fruit with their lives.

The Apostle Paul wrote the following to the Ephesians:

For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago (Ephesians 2:10 NLT).

Believers are to bear spiritual fruit in His service. We are to show tangible proof that we belong to Him.

### **4. He Has A Personal Plan For All Believers**

Although God has a universal will for all humanity, and all believers, He also has a personal will, or plan, for each individual. We find a number of biblical examples of this. They include the following:

#### **Believers Were Scattered So They Could Minister The Gospel Elsewhere**

When persecution came to the first Christians, it was God's will for the Apostles to minister in the church at Jerusalem and for others to carry the gospel to the other parts of the earth. We read the following in the Book of Acts:

Saul approved of putting Stephen to death. On that day widespread persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem. Most believers, except the apostles, were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Devout men buried Stephen as they mourned loudly for him. Saul tried to destroy the church. He dragged men and women out of one home after another and threw them into prison (Acts 8:1-4 God's Word).

The Lord used the scattering of the believers to carry the gospel elsewhere. In other words, His plan included the dispersion of believers so they could preach the gospel at many other places.

#### **Paul Was Told He Would Carry The Gospel To Many People**

Saul of Tarsus became the Apostle Paul when he was converted by Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road. The Lord then told a man named Ananias what he should tell Paul about his future ministry:

But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name" (Acts 9:15,16 NIV).

Paul was told that he would carry the good news about Jesus to Gentiles, to their kings, and to the people of Israel. This was the plan the Lord had for his life.

### **Paul And Barnabas Were Set Aside For God's Work**

We are told that the Holy Spirit set aside Paul and Barnabas for the work of the ministry. We read the following in the Book of Acts:

Among the prophets and teachers of the church at Antioch of Syria were Barnabas, Simeon (called "the black man"), Lucius (from Cyrene), Manaen (the childhood companion of King Herod Antipas), and Saul. One day as these men were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work I have for them" (Acts 13:1,2 NLT).

These examples demonstrate that not every believer has the same calling for their life. Indeed, God has a unique plan for each of us.

### **5. God's Personal Will Is Only For Believers**

It must be stressed that the will of God is only for those who have trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. Indeed, God does not have a plan for those who refuse to put their trust in Him. In other words, the Lord does not answer their prayers or guide their lives.

In fact, there is no basis of communication between God and those who are lost. Jesus used the analogy of sheep and the shepherd:

The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice. But they will never follow a stranger; in fact, they will run away from him because they do not recognize a stranger's voice ... I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me— just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep (John 10:3-5,14,15 NIV).

The believer can expect God to reveal His will, the unbeliever cannot. Indeed, He is the Shepherd of the saved, not of the lost.

### **6. We Can Expect To Find His Will**

Finally, each believer can expect to discover the will of God. It is not something that God hides from those who trust Him. Jesus said:

Keep asking, and it will be given to you. Keep searching, and you will find. Keep knocking, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who searches finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened (Matthew 7:7,8 CSB).

Jesus also said:

Those who want to follow the will of God will know if what I teach is from God or if I teach my own thoughts (John 7:17 God's Word).

The good news is that we can know His will.

**Summary To Question 22:  
Does God Have A Plan For Our Lives?**

The Bible says that the God of the Bible does indeed have a plan for humanity.

For unbelievers, His desire is that they should come to know Him. In fact, until they trust Christ as Savior, there is no guidance; there is no answered prayer from God. His plans are only for His children.

God does indeed have plans for all of those who believe. The Bible says that His plan is good. He wants all Christians to behave like Jesus. Ultimately every believer will be conformed to His image. It is also His desire that believers bear spiritual fruit.

The Bible says that God has plans for individuals. Indeed, we find this illustrated in Scripture. We are told that it was God's plan that believers be scattered from Jerusalem so they could preach the gospel in other places. This came about when the Christians were persecuted.

Thus, it was God's will that they be persecuted so that they could preach the good news elsewhere.

Paul was told that he would carry the gospel to Gentiles, to their kings, as well as to the nation of Israel. This was the plan that the Lord had for his life.

It was in God's plan to set aside Paul and Barnabas for the work of the ministry. Again, the Lord had a specific plan for them.

Finally, the Bible is clear that God wants all believers to know His will. Indeed, He is not hiding His plan from us—those who know and love Him.

### Question 23

#### **What Are The Various Responses Of Christians To Knowing God's Plan?**

Generally, Christians fall into several categories when it comes to knowing God's plan for them. We can list them as follows:

##### **1. Some Are Unconcerned About Knowing God's Plan For Their Lives**

Unhappily, some Christians are unconcerned about knowing the will of God. Though they have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, He is not the highest priority in their life—they let other distractions get in the way of finding God's best for them.

This type of person will never be happy until they surrender themselves to the Lord so they can know what He wants for them. Unfortunately, there are too many Christians in this category.

##### **2. Some Are Unwilling To Pay The Price To Serve The Lord**

Other Christians want to know what God has for them, but they are unwilling to pay the price to know His will. They want all that God has for them, but they want it the easy way.

The Bible says Jesus encountered people like this. For example, when called to follow Jesus, one man responded with an excuse:

“Lord, first let me return home and bury my father.” But Jesus told him, “Follow me now! Let those who are spiritually dead care for their own dead” (Matthew 8:21,22 NLT).

This man would not immediately follow Jesus. He wanted to wait. Too many people today feel the same way. They will follow Jesus—eventually.

On another occasion, Jesus compared the call to discipleship to a great supper or banquet. We read about this in Luke's gospel:

Jesus told him: A man once gave a great banquet and invited a lot of guests. When the banquet was ready, he sent a servant to tell the guests, “Everything is ready! Please come.” One guest after another started making excuses. The first one said, “I bought some land, and I've got to look it over. Please excuse me.” Another guest said, “I bought five teams of oxen, and I need to try them out. Please excuse me.” Still another guest said, “I have just gotten married, and I can't be there” (Luke 14:16-20 CEV).

While all were invited to the banquet, many made excuses as to why they could not come. The same is true with many believers in our day and age—

they make excuses as to why they cannot follow Christ. However, none of their excuses are any good.

### **3. Some Want To Know And Will Take The Necessary Steps**

Finally, there are those believers who do want to know God's will, and are willing to take the necessary steps to know it. Paul wrote:

Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is (Ephesians 5:17 NIV).

If we so desire, we can understand the "will of the Lord."

#### **His Way Is To Be Desired**

The way of the Lord is something which is much to be desired. The psalmist wrote the following:

The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever; the ordinances of the LORD are reliable and altogether righteous. They are more desirable than gold—than an abundance of pure gold; and sweeter than honey—than honey dripping from the comb (Psalm 19:9,10 CSB).

The way of the Lord is indeed something to be desired by those who know Him.

#### **There Is A Price To Pay**

There is, however, a price to pay for discipleship. Jesus said that we must count the cost if we are to follow Him:

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "If anyone wants to become my follower, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24 NET).

Those who follow Christ will be persecuted to some extent. Paul wrote to Timothy about this possibility:

Yes, and everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12 NLT).

We will suffer some type of persecution if we live a godly life.

#### **Jesus' Way Is Not The Easiest**

Therefore, it is not the easiest of roads to follow Jesus Christ. However, it is the only "right road." In fact, every believer enters God's kingdom through the narrow gate. Jesus explained it in this manner:

Go in through the narrow gate. The gate to destruction is wide, and the road that leads there is easy to follow. A lot of people go through that gate. But the gate to life is very narrow. The road that leads there

is so hard to follow that only a few people find it (Matthew 7:13,14 NLT).

The key is to stay on that straight and narrow road.

**Summary To Question 23**  
**What Are The Various Responses**  
**Of Christians To Knowing God's Plan?**

God has a special plan for each and every believer. The good news is that we all can know that particular plan for our life. However, not all Christians respond the same way to knowing His plan.

Unfortunately, there are too many Christians who are unconcerned about knowing God's will for themselves. Their attention is on other things.

Others may be interested in God's plan, but are unwilling to pay the price. They too miss the blessings of knowing the plan of God.

Those who wish to know the will of God, and are willing to pay the price, will receive great spiritual rewards when they find God's best for their life. Jesus' way is not easy, but it is the best. Indeed, it the right road which all of us should take.

## Question 24

### **Are There Universal Principles for Believers Who Want to Know God's Will?**

Yes. There are a number of universal principles to be considered when one attempts to determine the plan of God for our lives—there are certain things every Christian should do. We can list them as follows:

#### **1. Believers Should Be Giving Thanks Always**

The Bible tells us that God wants us to continue to give thanks to Him. Paul wrote the following to the Thessalonians:

Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do (1 Thessalonians 5:18 CEV).

Thankfulness should be part of the normal life of the believer. We do indeed have so much to be thankful for, and it is God's will, or desire, that we be thankful.

#### **2. Believers Should Be Set Apart For God**

It is God's will that we are set apart for service to Him. One of the ways we can do that is by being sexually pure. The Bible gives the following command for those who believe in Christ:

For this is God's will, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality (1 Thessalonians 4:3 CSB).

God wants the believer to be holy.

Consequently, we should make it a priority to be set apart for Him and His service. This means saying no!

#### **3. Believers Should Do What Is Right**

It is also God's will for us to do that which is right. Peter wrote about how believers are supposed to do good:

For God wants you to silence the ignorance of foolish people by doing good (1 Peter 2:15 NET).

The Lord wants those who trust Him to do what is right.

#### **Believers Will Suffer For The Cause Of Christ**

This is one of the things which we do not like to hear. It is the will of God that sometimes we will suffer for Him. Peter wrote about this:

So then let those who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator as they do good (1 Peter 4:19 NET).

Suffering, according to the will of God, is part of the experience of the Christian.

Jesus Himself spoke of believers who would suffer for the sake of the kingdom of God. We read the following words of Him in the Sermon on the Mount:

God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way (Matthew 5:10-12 NLT).

Those who have trusted Jesus Christ will suffer for their beliefs. This is something which naturally follows when we believe in Him.

### **Believers Will Be Glorified With Christ**

Once this life is over, it is God's plan that we will be glorified in Him. This is indeed a wonderful promise. Paul wrote to the Romans:

And since we are his children, we will share his treasures—for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too. But if we are to share his glory, we must also share his suffering (Romans 8:17 NLT).

There will come a time when believers share the things that belong to Jesus. This is what He wills for us. However, this glorification will not take place in this life.

In sum, there are indeed universal principles which God has laid down for believers to know His will for them.

### **Summary To Question 24: Are There Any Universal Principles For Believers Who Want To Know God's Will?**

When a person attempts to discover the will of God for their lives, they must do it in the context of the universal principles that God has set down for every believer. These universal principles include the following:

For one thing, it is God's will that every believer gives thanks continually to the Lord. Thankfulness is something which all believers should express.

In addition, the Bible says that it is God's will that believers are set apart to Him. To be in His service, we cannot be like those in the unbelieving world. Indeed, we need to act differently.

It is also God's will that believers do the things that are right. As best as we can, we have to make the right decisions—the godly decisions.

Scripture says that it is the will of God that believers suffer for the cause of Christ. While we do not like to hear this, this is something which will indeed characterize the Christian. They persecuted Jesus. If we want to do His will, then we should likewise expect a certain amount of persecution.

Eventually, according to the will of God, all believers will be glorified with Jesus Christ. This will occur when we see Him face to face. What a wonderful day that will be!

This sums up some of the universal principles which Scripture sets down so that we can personally know God's will for us.

## Question 25

### What Are The Biblical Guidelines For Knowing The Will Of God?

Those who believe in Jesus Christ should desire to know what He has planned for their lives. The good news is that we can know. Indeed, there are a number of guidelines that the Bible gives for knowing God's will. They include the following:

#### 1. There Should Be A Genuine Desire To Know God's Will

To begin with, there needs to be a genuine desire on the part of the believer to know the will of the Lord. Jesus made it clear that we can know God's will if we desire, or resolve, to know it, as well as choose to do it. John records Him saying:

Anyone who chooses to do the will of God will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own (John 7:17 NIV).

There needs to be a real desire not only to want to know God's will for our life, but also a desire to do His will.

#### 2. We Should Yield Ourselves To The Lord

Believers are to voluntarily present themselves before the Lord to know His will for their lives. We read in the Old Testament about a man named Amasiah who served the Lord willingly. Scripture says.

Amasiah son of Zichri, who volunteered to serve the LORD, led 200,000 skilled warriors (2 Chronicles 17:16 NET).

This man volunteered, or yielded, his life to the Lord. Yielding means "setting our own personal desires aside." We are to make His desires our desires. If we want to be in the Lord's will, then this is something which we must choose to do.

#### 3. Believers Should Confess Their Sins

Confession of sin is an important part of discovering God's will. The psalmist wrote about this when he said:

If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, my Lord would not have listened (Psalm 66:18 NLT).

Before we hear God's will, we need to be honest with Him and confess our sins.

Believers also need to forsake their secret sins. The psalmist wrote about the importance of doing this:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 139:23,24 NIV).

Confession of these sins is necessary. The Lord knows what they are. We need to tell Him that we want to forsake them. This is what confession is all about. We agree with God that certain things are sinful, and we are sincere about forsaking them.

#### **4. Believers Should Pray On A Regular Basis**

We should also come before the Lord in prayer on a regular basis. Paul wrote to the Colossians about this important aspect of our spiritual life:

For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9 CSB).

He told the Colossians that he had not stopped praying from them. This is a great example for us to follow. Paul also wrote to the Colossians:

Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured (Colossians 4:12 NIV).

Here is a great testimony concerning this man Epaphras. Paul said that he "wrestles" in his prayer on behalf of the Colossian believers—so that they can know the Lord's will.

#### **5. Believers Should Seek Guidance Through The Bible**

God gives direction or guidance to those who believe in Him. The Scripture can give directions in two ways.

First, the Bible can prohibit a certain course of action. It tells us what not to do. It is important that we obey these commands.

Other verses can give the believer a definite course of action. Sometimes a verse that has never been noticed before will come alive for the believer who is wanting direction from the Lord. The psalmist wrote about the guidance we do receive from His Word:

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105 God's Word).

Guidance can be sought through God's written Word. Indeed, His Word directs our paths.

## 6. Believers Should Ask For Wisdom

If we are not certain of what to do, then we should ask the Lord to give us wisdom. James wrote about God's desire to grant wisdom to us:

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you. But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord (James 1:5-7 NIV).

We all need wisdom.

## 7. We Should Allow The Holy Spirit To Influence Our Decisions

The Bible says that God's Spirit lives inside each person who has trusted Christ as Savior. He has been placed there for a number of reasons.

For one thing, He has been given to lead us into God's truth. Consequently, the Holy Spirit can influence our decisions—He can lead us in the ways of the Lord—if we allow Him to do so.

We read in the Book of Acts how Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to speak to the Gentile, Cornelius. The Bible says:

The Spirit told me to have no hesitation about going with them. These six brothers also went with me, and we entered the man's house (Acts 11:12 NIV).

In this instance, the Spirit of God led Simon Peter to speak to Gentiles, non-Jews, about the good news of Jesus.

We also read elsewhere in Acts how the Holy Spirit stopped certain believers from going to a particular area.

The Apostle Paul explained what happened in this manner:

Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to (Acts 16:6,7 NIV).

In the same way, the Holy Spirit should be influencing all of our decisions. He will direct us; He will lead us if we permit Him to be our guide. Our primary responsibility as believers in Jesus Christ is to allow Him to guide us.

## 8. Believers Should Be Patient To Discover God's Will

We also must be patient to hear God's will. There is a time and a place for God's will to unfold. We must wait for that time and place. When we do so, we will discover that He will never disappoint us. We read in Isaiah:

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed" (Isaiah 28:16 NIV).

Indeed, we will never be dismayed at God's will for us. It will always come at the right time, and it will be for our own good.

This is confirmed by the writings of Paul. He told the Romans that God is working all things together for good:

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose (Romans 8:28 NKJV).

All things will eventually work together for good for those who belong to Him. This is a solid truth which we can always cling to. Eventually, all things will work for the good so that we can be molded into the image of Christ.

## 9. We Are To Walk In God's Will Once We Know It

We have our own responsibilities. Indeed, once God reveals His will to the believer, there is the responsibility to walk in it. We are to obey what He has told us. The Apostle Paul gave his own testimony to King Agrippa as to how he obeyed God's command:

Whereupon, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19 KJV).

Our responsibility is also to obey what the Lord reveals to us. We are to act on the light as far as we have received it. That means we take a step toward God to receive more understanding. We then take another step and our understanding becomes greater. In other words, it is an ongoing process.

We read about this in the Book of Proverbs:

The path of the righteous is like the morning sun, shining ever brighter till the full light of day (Proverbs 4:18 NIV).

We should always be moving confidently forward, trusting God. In doing so, the path will get brighter and brighter.

## 10. The Believer Needs To Be Available

Finally, we must be available for the Lord to use us. Indeed, the greatest ability we can have is “availability:”

I heard the voice of the sovereign master say, “Whom will I send? Who will go on our behalf?” I answered, “Here I am, send me!” (Isaiah 6:8 NET).

Like Isaiah, we should make ourselves available. The Lord is looking for people who are available to serve Him. This sums up some of the biblical guidelines for knowing what the Lord wants for us—His divine will.

### Summary To Question 25:

#### What Are The Biblical Guidelines For Knowing The Will Of God?

From Scripture, we discover that God does have a plan for our lives. His plan is good. To discover His plan, we have to follow the guidelines given to us in Scripture.

First, a person should yield themselves to God. We have to desire to know His will, as well as do His will. This is primary.

Confession of sin is also essential. We must admit when we fall short of God’s perfect standard—hence we ask Him to help us overcome these failures.

One should also come before the Lord in prayer on a regular basis. We must be in continual communication with Him.

The believer should then seek guidance through a study of Scripture, and through the work of the Holy Spirit in their life. It is through the Word of God, guided by the Spirit of God, that we know what He wants for us.

We should be patient in attempting to discover His will. It is not always revealed in our timing. Indeed, His timing and our timing are sometimes different.

Once the will of God has been revealed, then we should conduct our lives accordingly. In other words, we must act upon the things that we know are true. This is our responsibility.

Our greatest ability we have is our availability. Each believer needs to make themselves totally available to God. In this way, the Lord can speak to us to lead us and to guide us.

Therefore, any time we want to discover the will of God for our lives, we need to apply these unchanging guidelines to our life.

## Question 26

### **What Practical Things Can We Do In Making Major Decisions For Our Life?**

When it comes to making decisions for our lives, especially the major ones, what are some of the practical things that we can do in making these decisions? Does the Bible tell us what we should do? Indeed, it does!

From Scripture, we can make a number of observations.

#### **1. We Should Want To Know His Will**

The first step in knowing the will of God is having the desire to know what He wants for us. The Apostle Paul prayed for the Colossians to know God's will. He put it this way:

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding (Colossians 1:9 NKJV).

He prayed that these believers would want to know God's will. We too, should desire to know His will—if we are going to make godly decisions in our lives.

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed that the will of God be accomplished. Matthew records the following:

He went on a little farther and fell face down on the ground, praying, "My Father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet I want your will, not mine" (Matthew 26:39 NLT).

We should have the same burning desire to know God's will for our life. This should be the highest priority.

#### **2. We Should Trust God To Show Us**

There are several steps that a person should follow to know the will of God for their lives. The Book of Proverbs tells us to do the following:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5,6 NIV).

We must completely trust the Lord in all matters, and not trust our own understanding. If we acknowledge Him in everything that we do, then He has promised to direct our paths. This is His promise to us.

#### **What Is The Desire Of Our Heart?**

There must be a certain desire in our heart to know God's best for us. The Bible promises to give us the desire of our heart:

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this (Psalm 37:4,5 NIV).

We need to have the desire to know Him, and His will, then He has promised to give us the desires of our heart. Again, this is primary.

### **What Are Our Circumstances?**

There is also a question that we must answer. Do our circumstances match with the desires that we have? God often uses circumstances to show us His will. When we ask for something according to His will, and then we find this coming to pass through circumstances, then we can know that we are in His will. The Bible says:

And we are confident that he hears us whenever we ask for anything that pleases him. And since we know he hears us when we make our requests, we also know that he will give us what we ask for (1 John 5:14, 15 NLT).

The circumstances can help us determine His will.

### **3. Believers Should Seek The Advice Of Godly People**

Godly people should be consulted when making these decisions. The Book of Proverbs encourages us to seek guidance from godly people:

For waging war you need guidance, and for victory many advisers (Proverbs 24:6 NIV).

It is wise to seek godly wisdom from other believers. This can save the believer from experiencing needless pitfalls. Scripture encourages us to seek advice from church leaders. The writer to the Hebrews said:

Remember your leaders, who spoke God's message to you; reflect on the outcome of their lives and imitate their faith . . . Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls and will give an account for their work. Let them do this with joy and not with complaints, for this would be no advantage for you (Hebrews 13:7,17 NET)

The advice of godly people is important. Indeed, we are commanded to seek it.

### **4. The Scriptures Should Be The Final Guide**

The Bible should be always our final guide on all matters in which it touches. The psalmist emphasized what it takes to live wisely—to follow the Lord. It is obeying God's Word, following His precepts. He explained it in this manner:

To obey the LORD is the fundamental principle for wise living; all who carry out his precepts acquire good moral insight. He will receive praise forever (Psalm 111:10 NET).

The Christian Standard Bible puts it this way:

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his instructions have good insight. His praise endures forever (Psalm 111:10 CSB).

Following God's Word will never lead us astray. If God's Word tells us to do something, then we should do it. End of story.

## **5. We Should Wait Until All Of These Things Are In Place**

Any major decision should not be made until all of these guidelines are followed. Thus, we should ask ourselves the following questions:

First, do we have a desire, or conviction, to make a certain decision?

Second, are the circumstances matching up with our convictions?

Third, how do godly people feel about our decision?

Finally, does the Bible have anything to say on the matter? Once these are all in place, then it is time to make that decision.

### **Summary To Question 26: What Practical Things Can We Do In Making Major Decisions For Our Life?**

There are a number of practical things that a believer can, and must, do to discover the will of God for their lives. This is especially true when we are about to make major decisions.

First, and above all, there must be the desire to know His will. We should want to know what He wants for us. Then, there must be a trust that God will reveal it to us. He has promised to reveal Himself to us, and we should trust His promise.

Each believer needs to discover the desire of their own heart in this matter. In other words, we ask ourselves the question: What exactly do we want? We need to search our heart to find out what that godly desire may be. Next, we should see if the circumstances match our desires. Many times the Lord will use the circumstances to guide us.

It is also wise to seek the advice of godly people. The Bible says that godly people can indeed provide spiritual wisdom.

The Scripture should be the final guide as to how we should act. His Holy Word is our guidebook, our road map.

In sum, before any major decision is made, all of these things should be in place.

## Question 27

### Should Believers Put Out A Fleece To Know God's Will?

Often, we hear of people “putting out a fleece” to know what God has for them. What exactly does this mean?

The idea of putting out a fleece goes back to the Old Testament account of the Judge Gideon. The timid Gideon wanted to know if God meant it when the Lord promised him that he would be the one who would lead Israel to defeat their enemies, the Midianites.

Fearful Gideon needed to know if this was really true. The Bible then explains what occurred:

Then Gideon said to God, “If you are truly going to use me to rescue Israel as you promised, prove it to me in this way. I will put some wool on the threshing floor tonight. If the fleece is wet with dew in the morning but the ground is dry, then I will know that you are going to help me rescue Israel as you promised.” And it happened just that way. When Gideon got up the next morning, he squeezed the fleece and wrung out a whole bowlful of water. Then Gideon said to God, “Please don't be angry with me, but let me make one more request. This time let the fleece remain dry while the ground around it is wet with dew.” So that night God did as Gideon asked. The fleece was dry in the morning, but the ground was covered with dew (Judges 6:36-40 NLT).

Gideon's prayers were miraculously answered on each of these occasions.

#### Is This A Valid Method?

God answered the requests of Gideon. The first test was that the ground around the fleece be dry, while only the fleece be wet. God did as Gideon asked.

Gideon made a second request. He asked that the fleece be dry while all the ground around it be wet. For a second time, God granted his request.

The question for us is as follows: Should believers today put out a fleece like Gideon? Should we ask the Lord for signs such as this?

There are a number of things we must keep in mind.

#### 1. The Fleece Was To Confirm God's Will—Not Discover It

First, we must remember that Gideon's fleece was not an attempt to discover the will of God. On the contrary, the will of God had already been revealed to him. Gideon's fleece was put out to *confirm* that which the Lord had already revealed. This is extremely important to understand.

## **2. There Is No Other Example Of This Method In Scripture**

There is something else we must keep in mind. As we search the Scripture, we do not find another episode that is similar to the experience of Gideon—there are no other examples of this practice. This episode was unique.

## **3. We Should Look To His Written Word**

Rather than asking God for some miraculous sign, it is so much better, and much more biblical, to go to God's written Word, as well as the guidance of the Holy Spirit, for answers.

First, God has given us His written Word as an infallible guide. The psalmist declared:

Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path (Psalm 119:105  
God's Word)

In addition, we have the indwelling Holy Spirit to teach us. Paul wrote:

These are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God (1 Corinthians 2:10 NIV).

Therefore, while the idea of putting out a fleece is biblical, it was never used to discover the will of God—it was merely to confirm it.

### **Summary To Question 27:**

#### **Should Believers Put Out A Fleece To Know God's Will?**

There is disagreement among Bible believers as to the need to put out a fleece before the Lord. Should we test the Lord in this manner?

The idea of asking the Lord for some physical sign to confirm His Word is only found in the account of Gideon and the fleece. He asked the Lord for two signs, and his requests were granted. On consecutive nights, the Lord performed a miracle in order to confirm to Gideon that He had called him to judge Israel.

There is no other example in Scripture where we find God answering a prayer in this way. It is certainly not the normal way in which God speaks to His people. Therefore, we should not expect that God would deal with us in this manner.

While God can give supernatural signs to show us His will for us, His usual way is to speak to us through His Word, as well as through the Holy Spirit who lives inside of each believer. This is how we should determine what we are to do.

## Question 28

### **What Should Believers Not Do When Attempting To Discover The Will Of God?**

While God gives us a number of guidelines as to what we should do to determine His will, we also find that there are a number of things that believers should avoid when looking for God's direction in their life. The list of "don'ts" includes the following.

#### **1. We Should Not Use The Bible Incorrectly**

Most believers are aware that they receive direction from God through what He has revealed in Scripture. However, the Bible is often used in an incorrect manner in an attempt to discover God's will for living our lives.

Indeed, verses are taken out of context, and promises are claimed that are not directed at the believer. The person, using this method for guidance, assumes that God will now give them direction.

However, the Bible is not some magic book to be used in this manner. This type of treatment of Scripture will not reveal God's will. Never!

#### **2. We Should Never Assume That God Will Not Give Us Our Desires**

One of the common misconceptions about discovering God's plan is that people assume God does not want to give them what they desire. However, the Bible says otherwise. The psalmist made this clear when he wrote:

Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires.  
Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you (Psalm 37:4,5 NLT).

Too often, believers assume that if they turn their lives completely over to Christ, then He will somehow make their life miserable. He will send them to some place they do not like, and have them working at some job they will hate. This is simply not true.

#### **3. We Should Make Certain Our Desires Are The Lord's**

While God wants to give us our heart's desires, we need to make certain that they are the same as His desires. To find out what God wants for us, we must study His Word.

This is crucial to do! Indeed, the Lord, in the Bible, has told us the things that are pleasing to Him. At the end of the day, our desire should be to please Him, and to do what He wants us to do. This should be our desire.

**4. Believers Should Not Ask God To Show Them What He Has Already Revealed In His Word**

It is not necessary to agonize in prayer over things that God has already revealed. For example, if a person is married, it is the will of God that the family be supported. The Bible says:

Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever (1 Timothy 5:8 NIV).

No one needs to pray and ask God if this is His will. He has already told us that it is! Thus, we need to act upon that which has been revealed.

**5. Believers Should Not Assume Full Time Christian Service Is the Best For Them**

God has not called everyone to full-time Christian service. However, the Lord has called everyone to be full-time Christians. Believers should not assume they are somehow less spiritual if they are not involved in some type of full-time Christian ministry.

Not everyone is called to be a pastor, Bible teacher, or missionary. We are all members of Christ's body, and consequently have different functions. The Apostle wrote:

For just as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body—though many—are one body, so too is Christ. . . . If the whole body were an eye, what part would do the hearing? If the whole were an ear, what part would do the smelling? But as a matter of fact, God has placed each of the members in the body just as he decided. If they were all the same member, where would the body be? So now there are many members, but one body (1 Corinthians 12:12,17-20 NET).

Full-time Christian service is not for everyone. Indeed, we need full-time Christians working at places where they can reach people who would never darken the door of a church—who would never listen to a pastor or missionary. God has strategically placed Christians so they can reach these people who otherwise would be unreached.

**6. Believers Should Not Let Someone Else Tell Them What To Do**

Often there are well-meaning people who presume to tell others what God has for their life. They believe that they know what is best for someone else.

While it is important to get feedback from other godly people, God knows how to contact us. Make certain that any decision you make is not based solely upon what some other Christian told you that you should do. The Lord is certainly capable of speaking to you apart from others.

**7. Believers Should Not Assume That Every Decision Must Be Accompanied By Good Feelings**

We should not assume that every decision that we make will be accompanied by some warm peaceful feeling. By always waiting for some type of inner confirmation, people can become paralyzed from going forward. Sometimes we need to move forward based solely upon faith—not our feelings.

**8. We Should Not Let Feelings Alone Be Our Guide**

While believers need to be led by the Holy Spirit in discerning God's best for them, feelings alone are not sufficient. Feeling right about something is not the only criterion for making a decision. Other circumstances should be in place. We are to walk by faith, not by our feelings, or by what we see. Paul wrote:

That is why we live by believing and not by seeing (2 Corinthians 5:7 NLT).

Feelings alone are not a sufficient guide.

**9. We Should Not Let Circumstances Alone Determine Whether We Are In God's Will**

While we should not let feelings alone determine if we are in God's will, believers need to avoid the idea that they must be in God's will if everything is going fine in their life. The absence of conflict does not necessarily mean we are doing God's will.

On the other hand, we should not assume that we are out of God's will if we are experiencing difficulties. The test is not the outward circumstances—the test is whether or not we are being obedient to Him. Outward circumstances change. Our desire to be obedient should never change.

**10. We Should Not Be Unrealistic About Our Expectations**

We are told to believe God for great things. In fact, Jesus said the following to His disciples about the things they would eventually accomplish:

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater *works* than these he will do, because I go to My Father (John 14:12 NKJV).

However, we also need to be realistic about what we should do. We should dream big—because we have a big God.

Yet, our dreams should be realistic.

**11. We Should Not Assume That Some Past Sin In Our Life Will Stop Us From Being Used**

This is very important. Jonah ran away from his calling, and was eventually swallowed by a great sea creature. After the creature vomited Jonah, we are told the following:

And the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying (Jonah 3:1 KJV).

God was not finished with Jonah. He will not be finished with us either if we have committed some past sin. He is the God of the second chance. Praise Him for that!

There is a tremendous biblical illustration of this. On the night of Jesus' betrayal, Simon Peter denied knowing the Lord on three separate occasions. Scripture records this famous episode in the following manner:

Now Peter was sitting out in the courtyard, and a servant girl came to him. "You also were with Jesus of Galilee," she said. But he denied it before them all. "I don't know what you're talking about," he said. Then he went out to the gateway, where another servant girl saw him and said to the people there, "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth." He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!" After a little while, those standing there went up to Peter and said, "Surely you are one of them; your accent gives you away." Then he began to call down curses, and he swore to them, "I don't know the man!" Immediately a rooster crowed. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: "Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times." And he went outside and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:69-75 NIV).

However, fifty days later, it was Simon Peter who preached the first sermon for the New Testament church on the Day of Pentecost. His sin was forgiven and forgotten.

Sins should be confessed, and then the believer should go forward. God is a forgiving God. Once He forgives us of our sin, it is then time to move forward.

**12. We Should Not Assume That Past Wrong Decisions Will Keep Us From His Will**

There is an assumption that if someone has made a wrong decision in the past, it will affect God's leading for that person for their entire life. Yet, this is not true. We all make wrong decisions. These can be corrected. We need to trust that God can overrule our past decisions.

This sums up some of the misconceptions that believers have when attempting to discover God's will for their lives.

**Summary To Question 28:  
What Should Believers Not Do When  
Attempting To Discover The Will of God?**

The Scripture gives us a number of things that we should do to discover God's plan, or will, for our lives. However, there are also many things we should not do. We need to be aware of what they are.

For example, believers should not wrongly use the Bible to determine God's will. We are to study the Bible in its overall context to determine what God is saying. We should not choose verses here and there, to try to discover God's best for us. This is not the proper method.

Also, we should not assume that because we want something, therefore, it is necessarily wrong. The key is having the right desires. We need our desires to line up with God's desires.

It is also wrong to ask God to show us something that He has already clearly revealed in His Word. If something is wrong, then it is always wrong.

Another mistake people make is assuming they should be in full-time Christian service. Not everyone is called to be in the full-time ministry, though all of us are called to be full-time Christians.

It is also important that we do not let someone else tell us what to do; God knows how to contact us. While we should seek godly advice, we should not allow others to tell us what to do.

In addition, we should not base our decision merely upon our feelings for they can lead us astray. Feelings alone should not be our guide. God's Word is our infallible guide.

While circumstances are important, circumstances alone should not determine whether or not we are in God's will. Circumstances change, but God's Word does not change.

Also, to be in God's will, we should have realistic expectations. While we should dream big because we have a big God, we should not expect things which are unrealistic.

In addition, past sin should not stop the believer from discovering God's will in the present. The past is the past. Our past sins have been forgiven and forgotten. That's where they belong.

Finally, we should not assume that wrong decisions in the past will keep us from ever knowing His will. He can use us despite our past failings and wrong decisions.

The key is to trust God to lead us, as He has promised. He will never let us down.

## Question 29

### How Can A Person Be Certain They Are Hearing God's Voice?

The Bible tells us that the living God is attempting to communicate with His creation. Jesus made this clear. He said:

My sheep listen to my voice, and I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27 NET).

His sheep can hear His voice. If this is the case, then how do we determine what is from God, and what is not? How can we hear His voice? There are several things that will help us make the proper determination.

#### 1. The Testimony Of Scripture

To begin with, God will not tell us to do anything that is against the commandments laid down in Scripture. The Bible is the final standard of authority on all matters of faith and practice.

Therefore, if we think we are hearing from God, and what we hear is contrary to Scripture, then we can be assured that it is *not* God speaking to us.

However, unless we take the time to read and study the Bible, we will not know what God has said is right belief and behavior, and what He has said is wrong belief and behavior. He is the only source who can tell us right from wrong. Therefore, a study of the Scripture is essential. This is primary if we want to know His voice.

#### 2. Prayer

A second way we can hear the voice of God is through prayer. Prayer is talking to God. It consists of asking God for things. James said:

You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures (James 4:3 NKJV).

While prayer is talking to God, it is also a time for Him to talk to us. Listening is also an important part of prayer. God promises to grant us wisdom if we listen to Him. We read in Proverbs:

For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding (Proverbs 2:6 NIV).

We need to listen, as well as to talk with God.

### **3. Confirmation From Other Believers**

If God is speaking to us, then the truth of what He is saying will be confirmed by others. We should listen to the advice of mature, godly people. We read in Proverbs:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and discipline (Proverbs 1:7 NIV).

When the council of Jerusalem met to decide the question as to whether Gentiles should be included in the New Testament church, they came to a unanimous decision. Scripture records what they said:

Since we have heard that some have gone out from among us with no orders from us and have confused you, upsetting your minds by what they said, we have unanimously decided to choose men to send to you along with our dear friends Barnabas and Paul (Acts 15:24,25 NET).

It is important to realize that God's people, who have the Spirit of God, are able to listen to His voice, and then to come to unanimous decisions.

### **4. The Peace Of God In Our Hearts**

Finally, there is the peace of God that He gives only to believers. The Bible says that this peace surpasses all human understanding:

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:7 NIV).

The Bible says we are to let the peace of God rule in our hearts. Paul wrote:

And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful (Colossians 3:15 NKJV).

God's peace should rule in our lives.

These are some of the practical things we can apply in order to be certain that we are hearing God's voice. It is important that we do indeed put these things into practice.

### **The Key Verse To Knowing God's Will**

The key verse, to discover God's will for our lives, is found in the book of First Samuel, where the Lord said the following:

I will honor those who honor me (1 Samuel 2:30 NLT).

If we honor Him, then He will honor us.

**Summary To Question 29:  
How Can A Person Be Certain They Are Hearing God's Voice?**

Jesus said that believers can hear His voice. We can know what He wants to tell us. Indeed, the believer can hear the voice of God in a number of ways. The primary way is through the Scripture. The Bible is God speaking to us. Therefore, we need to read and study His Word to determine His will. We can never claim to be in God's will if we do something contrary to Scripture.

Prayer also enters into the picture. Prayer is our speaking to God—we need to talk to Him to find out what He wants. We also need to listen to what He says. Believers should also pay attention to the words of godly people—they have much wisdom that they can share with us. We should take advantage of them.

Finally, we should allow the peace of God to rule in our hearts when we seek to know His will. His peace should be our guide.

In sum, if we honor Him, then He will honor us. This is the biblical method for hearing what God has to say to His children.

### Question 30

#### **How Does God Accomplish His Purpose In Our Lives?**

The Bible says that God is working out His purpose in our lives. Scripture tells us some of the ways in which He goes about it. They include the following.

##### **1. God Knows Everything That Is Occurring**

For one thing, the God of the Bible knows everything which is happening. Scripture says that nothing escapes the eyes of God the Father. Jesus said:

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows (Matthew 10:29-31 NIV).

Nothing escapes God's notice. He is all-knowing. Therefore, He sees every circumstance—everything.

##### **2. He Is The Ruler Of All Circumstances**

God is also in control of every circumstance. We read about this in the Book of Proverbs:

The dice are thrown into the lap but every decision is from the LORD (Proverbs 16:33 NET).

The God of the Bible is ultimately in charge of everything. The psalmist declared:

For the LORD is king! He rules all the nations (Psalm 22:28 NLT).

Consequently, the believer in Jesus Christ can be assured that whatever the circumstances may be, at the end of the day, the Lord is in control.

##### **3. He May Accomplish His Will Through Unbelievers**

Strange as it may seem, the Scripture teaches that sometimes God achieves His purpose by means of unbelievers. We read the following in the Book of Exodus:

The Lord had made the Egyptians favorably disposed toward the people, and they gave them what they asked for; so they plundered the Egyptians (Exodus 12:36 NIV).

Therefore, it should not be surprising that God may use unbelievers to accomplish His will in our lives.

These are some of the ways in which the God of Scripture accomplishes His purposes in our lives. It is our responsibility to be aware of these ways.

**Summary To Question 30:  
How Does God Accomplish His Purposes In Our Lives?**

God does the things which He desires to do. Nobody tells Him what to do, nobody influences His decisions. He alone makes the call. This includes achieving His purposes in our lives.

The Bible teaches that God does achieve His purpose in a variety of ways.

One way is through circumstances. Since nothing escapes His notice, He uses all sorts of circumstances to get His will accomplished in our lives. As the all-knowing, all-powerful Lord of the universe, He can use any and all circumstances to bring about His desired result.

The Lord also uses unbelievers to bring about His will. The Bible gives examples of this.

In sum, God is able to use anything and everything to let us know His will.

**10 Principles for  
Successful Christian Living**  
*Some Practical Suggestions*

We now come to a section which helps us put some of the truths which we have learned into practice. We call it, “10 Principles for Successful Christian Living.”

Basically, these are some concepts which we trust will help you live the type of Christian life which glorifies God. They should prove to be very beneficial.

### Question 31

#### **What Are The Ten Principles For Successful Christian Living?**

The “Ten Principles for Successful Christian living” are ten points that we would like to pass along to believers to help them in their Christian experience. These are not commandments, but rather helpful points to encourage believers to live the type of Christian life which is honoring to the Lord. Briefly, they are as follows:

##### **Principle 1     Get A Biblical View Of God**

The first principle is the most important of all. We must see God as the Bible portrays Him. Most of our problems will be under control when we learn who our God is, and what He continues to do for us. If we think right about God, most other things will fall into place. This is why this particular principle is placed first.

##### **Principle 2     Learn To Accept Yourself**

Once we know who God is, we should next get a proper view of who we are. It is extremely important that we become everything which God wants us to be.

On the other hand, we should never attempt to be someone who we are not. We want our lives to be lived to the fullest. This is what the Lord desires for us.

We can only do this by knowing exactly who we are. Therefore, we should recognize both our strengths and our weaknesses. Once we learn them, we should accept who we are, and then go on with our lives.

##### **Principle 3     Know What And Why You Believe**

The next step is to know exactly what we believe about God, as well as why we believe it. This can only come from a study of the Scripture. If someone asks us why we are Christians, and why we believe Christianity to be true, we should have an answer for them.

##### **Principle 4     Don't Compromise Your Convictions**

Now that we know who God is, who we are, what we believe about Him, and why we believe, we should not compromise these convictions. We should not compromise our belief system, neither should we compromise our behavior. It is crucial that we live according to these beliefs.

##### **Principle 5     Don't Major On The Minors**

Life is short. We should spend our time and energy concentrating on those things which are important. This means we ought to know what is of

eternal value. We should focus on the major things, the important things—not things which have no real importance for eternity.

**Principle 6 Remember To Forget**

We are to move forward in our Christian experience. This means we have to put the past behind us. Both the good and the bad should be forgotten in the sense that it does not affect how we live in the present. This means forgiving ourselves for our past sins. Once we have admitted them to God, then it is time that we move on. We should never live in the past.

**Principle 7 Reach Out To Others**

Jesus Christ came into the world for others—not for Himself. He has set an example for us to follow. Our lives should be characterized by our concern for others. While God has promised to take care of our own needs, we have a responsibility to look after the needs of others.

**Principle 8 Don't Be Disillusioned**

One of the problems that Christians often face is disillusionment. We have this idea of what we think our life is going to turn out to be, but along the way something, or someone, causes us to be disillusioned. The remedy for that is fixing our eyes upon Jesus Christ—He will never let us down, nor will He cause us any disillusionment.

**Principle 9 Be Flexible**

We should be flexible to the leading of the Spirit of God in our lives. God does not always work in the ways in which we expect Him to work. We belong to Him, and He is the One who chooses which path our lives will take. Therefore, we need to learn to adapt to the circumstances which we find ourselves.

**Principle 10 Expect The Unexpected**

The final principle explains that which we should experience if we attempt to follow the previous nine—the unexpected. The Lord wants to do marvelous things in our lives. Our responsibility is to allow Him to do so. We should expect the unexpected!

This is a brief summary of the ten principles we have devised in order that a believer in Jesus Christ can live successfully. As we mentioned, they are all biblical principles.

We will now spend an entire question developing each of these principles with the hope that it will be an encouragement to live the Christian life to the fullest.

**Summary To Question 31:  
What Are The Ten Principles For Successful Christian Living?**

In an attempt to encourage believers to live a life which is pleasing to the Lord, we have put together a number of biblical principles which we have found helpful.

First, we are to have a biblical view of God. Next, we should have a proper view of ourselves. We then need to know what we believe about God, as well as why we believe it. Then we should not compromise our convictions about God.

Our lives should then concentrate upon major areas of importance—not minor issues. When it comes to the past, we should put it behind us. It is important that we do not let it affect our present behavior.

Next, our behavior should be directed toward the needs of others—we are to reach out to them. As we continue our Christian experience, we should not let other people, or things, disillusion us.

Fixing our eyes completely upon Jesus can keep us from being disillusioned. Our life should be characterized by flexibility to the leading of God's Spirit. We are His creation, and it is up to Him to plan our life.

Finally, if we put these principles into practice, we should expect the unexpected from a God who wants to mightily bless us above anything that we may ask or think.

## Question 32

### Why Do We Need A Biblical View Of God? (Principle 1)

The first and foremost principle, for believers to live successfully in God's sight, is to get a biblical view of God. What do we mean by this?

Basically, it means that we need to see God as the Bible portrays Him—the God who can do anything which is consistent with His character. This is how we should understand the God of the Bible.

#### We Serve The God Of Jeremiah 32:27

The Bible says that nothing is too difficult for the God of the Bible. Indeed, He is different from all other so-called “gods.” Those “gods” do not exist, He does. Furthermore, He can do anything which He wishes.

The prophet Jeremiah records the Lord saying:

I am the LORD, the God of all mankind. Is anything too hard for me?  
(Jeremiah 32:27 NIV).

There is nothing too difficult for the Lord. Nothing. This should always be kept in mind by those who believe in Him. He can do whatever is necessary!

#### What To Do When Difficulties Arise

Knowing that nothing is too difficult for the God of the Bible has a number of practical implications. When we are faced with trouble, where there is seemingly no way out, there are three questions we should ask ourselves. They are as follows:

##### **Question 1: Have I Done Everything That I Can?**

The first question we need to ask ourselves concerns our own personal responsibility. “Have I done everything, which I am supposed to do, to take care of the problem?” “Have I done my part?” Once we are able to answer “Yes” to this, we can then move on to the second question.

##### **Question 2: Can God Do Anything About It?**

The next question we ask ourselves is this, “Can God do anything about the particular problem I am facing?” “Is He able?” It is at this point where we remind ourselves of what the Bible has to say about God's ability.

We may want to read some of the stories where the God of Scripture shows His mighty power.

For example, the Lord parted the Red Sea so that the children of Israel could escape the Egyptian army. Jesus fed 4,000 people with seven loaves

of bread and two small fish. Three days after He was dead, Jesus was raised from the dead.

The list goes on and on. The God of the Bible has the power to do miracles. He can do whatever is necessary.

Once we have it in our mind that God is able to do something about our problem, then we should ask ourselves this last question.

**Question 3: Is God Willing To Do Anything About My Problem?**

The final question concerns the willingness of God. “Is He willing to do anything about my specific problem?” “Does He want to help?”

Not only does God want to help us with our particular problem, as we read the Scripture, we discover that God is practically begging us to trust Him—to give the problem to Him. Jesus said:

If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest (Matthew 11:28 CEV).

Jesus tells us to bring our burdens, our problems, to Him and He will take them, and then give us rest.

In a similar manner, Peter wrote about the need to cast all of our cares upon the Lord. He explained it this way:

Casting all your care upon Him, because He cares about you (1 Peter 5:7 CSB).

Since the Lord says that He cares for us, we should allow Him to take charge of all of our cares—all of our worries.

There is still more. In the Book of Psalms, we have the Lord making the following promise to those who believe in Him:

Call on me in times of trouble. I will rescue you, and you will honor me (Psalm 50:15 God’s Word).

This is a promise of God. When we are in trouble, we need to call upon Him. If we do, He has promised that He will rescue us! By doing so, we will honor Him.

Hence, we need to take advantage of these promises of God, and apply them to our lives. We need to let God be God!

Accordingly, the next time we are faced with a seemingly insurmountable problem, we should first ask ourselves if we have done all that we could do about it. If so, we should then realize that the God of the Bible can do something about our problem. He is able.

Finally, we should understand that God is more than willing to do something about the problem we face. Consequently, we should let Him do what He wishes to do. He will take care of it.

Therefore, if we truly want to live a successful Christian life, then we need to have a proper view of the God of the Bible. He is a God who exists, who is able to deal with our needs, and who is more than willing to do so.

Let's have a biblical view of God and let's put into practice what it teaches about Him.

**Summary To Question 32:  
Why Do We Need A Biblical View Of God? (Principle 1)**

There are a number of important things we ought to do if we want to live a successful life in the eyes of the Lord. However, above anything else we may do or think, to live a life that is pleasing to the Lord, it is essential that we have a biblical view of God.

We must see God as the Bible portrays Him. In fact, most of our problems will be overcome when we realize who God is, what He is capable of doing, as well as His stated desire to help us. This is why this first principle is so very important.

One of the key verses in all of this is Jeremiah 32:27. In this verse the Lord says He is the God of all humanity. He then asks the question "Is anything too difficult for Me?" The answer, of course, is "No." Nothing is too difficult for the God of the Bible. He can do whatever it takes. This describes the God of Scripture—this is the God that we must continue to learn to trust.

Understanding who God is, and what He can do, is very practical. Indeed, it helps us face the problems of this life and overcome them. Thus, when faced with a specific problem, there are three questions we should always ask ourselves if we want the matter resolved. We do this by having a biblical view of God.

The first question is, "Have I done everything I can to solve the problem?" We have certain responsibilities, and we must do our part.

The second question is, "Can God do anything about it?" From the Scripture, we find that God certainly has the power to fix our problem. We should never doubt this.

The third question is this: "Is God willing to do anything about my particular problem?" As we read the Scripture, we not only find that God is willing, He is, in a sense, pleading with us to give Him our problem. He wants us to trust Him. Consequently, we give our problem over to Him asking Him to be God in our lives.

Once it is in His mighty hands, then there are a number of promises we can claim. When we call upon Him, the Lord has promised to hear our

prayer, and to deliver us from our problem in the way which He knows best. In doing so, we honor Him.

Therefore, if we get a proper view of God, a view which can only come from studying the Bible, we then see our problems in light of this majestic, all-powerful, loving Person. Getting a biblical view of God will be of immense help as we face our day-to-day struggles.

Consequently, it is essential that we constantly apply this first principle. May we always have a biblical view of God!

### Question 33

#### **Why Is It Necessary To Learn To Accept Ourselves For Whom God Made Us? (Principle 2)**

The first step in living a successful Christian life is getting a biblical view of the God of the Bible. We are to view God as the Bible portrays Him, and then act upon what it says that we are to do. This first step is essential.

After we gain a correct biblical view of God, the next thing we need to do is to get a proper view of ourselves. We need to know who we are. In other words, we should have a proper evaluation of the various strengths, as well as weaknesses, which we possess.

Indeed, if we want to live in such a way as to win the race of life, then we must know exactly who we are, as well as what we can and cannot do.

#### **We All Have Gifts From God**

While all of us have our weaknesses, we also have strengths. Indeed, the Bible says that all believers have been gifted by the Lord. The Apostle Paul wrote the following about the different gifts in the body of Christ:

Our bodies don't have just one part. They have many parts. Suppose a foot says, "I'm not a hand, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the foot still belong to the body? Or suppose an ear says, "I'm not an eye, and so I'm not part of the body." Wouldn't the ear still belong to the body? . . . But God has put all parts of our body together in the way that he decided is best. A body isn't really a body, unless there is more than one part. It takes many parts to make a single body (1 Corinthians 12:13-15,18-20 CEV).

All of us have been given certain gifts. Therefore, each of us has a purpose in this life, and a responsibility to use these gifts of God.

#### **Christ Died For Us When We Were His Enemies**

There is something else which we must appreciate. The Bible says that when we were enemies of God, Jesus Christ died on our behalf. Paul wrote to the Romans:

Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful (Romans 5:6-8 CEV).

Christ loved us when we did not love Him. Indeed, He died for us when we were still His enemies—when we seemingly had nothing to offer Him.

### **If He Accepts Us As We Are, Then We Should Accept Ourselves**

This brings us to our main point. If the living God accepts us for exactly who we are, then we should learn to accept ourselves for who we are. We should realize that God has made us a certain way—for His purpose.

Consequently, we should never “second guess” God. He always knows best. Thus, we should not complain about who we are. We have been made this particular way to fulfill God’s purpose in our life.

### **Take What You Do Seriously But Learn To Laugh At Yourself**

If we learn to accept ourselves for exactly who we are, then there are a number of practical benefits. Indeed, one of the most freeing things about being a Christian is the ability to laugh at ourselves.

On the one hand, we always should take our Christian experience seriously. In other words, living the Christian life should be our utmost desire. To live as a Christian should be the most important thing in our life.

However, we should not take ourselves too seriously. What does this mean? It means that we should all learn to laugh at ourselves. We are going to fail. We are going to make mistakes. We have to give ourselves the freedom to fail.

### **We Must Learn To Walk Spiritually**

This has to be understood. As new Christians, we learn to walk spiritually in the same way that we once learned to walk physically. When each of us began to learn to walk, we would fall down in the process. This is only natural.

In the same manner, as each of us learns to walk spiritually, we will also fall down at times. This is going to happen whether we like it or not. We are going to fail; we are going to make mistakes.

Therefore, we should accept who we are as God has made us, and not try to be someone who we are not. The Lord has made us a certain way. We should accept this, and be that person whom He has made. Nothing more, and certainly nothing less.

This basically sums up this second principle. We must learn to accept ourselves for exactly who we are, and live our lives with that acceptance.

### **Summary To Question 33**

#### **Why Is It Necessary To Learn To Accept Ourselves For Whom God Made Us? (Principle 2)**

If we want to live a successful Christian life, then it is important that we first know who God is. The God of the Bible is all-powerful—He can meet any need that we have. Moreover, He wants to meet these needs.

Furthermore, He has promised to take care of our problems if we will only allow Him to do so. Understanding this is primary.

However, once we have a biblical view of God, we must also have a realistic view of who we are.

Each of us has various strengths and weaknesses. It is important that we recognize what they are. In evaluating ourselves, we must be honest about who we really are. We need to know the specific areas in which we may fail. We also must realize what strengths we have. In other words, we need a realistic view of ourselves.

Above all, we should not attempt to be someone who we are not. We are only fooling ourselves if we try to do this. God has made us a certain way, and we need to accept that.

One of the main reasons as to why we should have a proper view of ourselves, concerns the Person of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that God has loved us unconditionally—Jesus died on the cross for us when we were His enemies.

Christ then offers forgiveness of sin—if we come to Him in faith. The Lord accepts us just as we are. We do not have to change who we are to believe in Him. We believe in Jesus, and then our life begins to change.

This is certainly a wonderful truth. If the God of the universe accepts us for exactly who we are, then we ought to accept ourselves. If He gave something of infinite worth for us, the death of His own Son, then we must be worth something in His sight. This should help us appreciate that we are not worthless creatures.

It also helps if we learn to laugh at ourselves. We should take seriously the Christian life and how we represent Jesus Christ. However, we should also learn to laugh at our own failings. We are certainly going to have them.

Consequently, we must give ourselves the freedom to fail as we grow in the Lord. We are going to let ourselves down, but we are not really going to disappoint God. He knows all along that we are going to fail at certain things.

However, the Lord remains with us. He promises to guide us through the difficult times. This is tremendously encouraging. When we are weak, then He is strong. Let us never forget this.

Consequently, after we have a biblical view of God, the next step is that we have the correct view of ourselves. Putting these two principles into action will go a long way in living a successful Christian life.

### Question 34

#### Why Is It Important That We Know What And Why We Believe? (Principle 3)

Once believers have a correct view of the God of the Bible, and then a proper view of themselves, they then need to know what they believe about this God, and *why* they believe it. This is so crucial.

Consequently, our third principle for successful Christian living consists of knowing what we believe, as well why we believe it.

#### We Should Know What We Believe

First, we are to know what we believe about God. If someone would ask us what we believe about the basics of the Christian faith, then we should be able to give them an answer. Each of us, who believe in Jesus, should be able to articulate these biblical truths.

The Apostle Paul wrote about the need of believers to test themselves to make certain they are in the faith:

Test yourselves [to see] if you are in the faith. Examine yourselves. Or do you not recognize for yourselves that Jesus Christ is in you?— unless you fail the test (2 Corinthians 13:5 CSB).

Each of us needs this type of self-examination. We need to test ourselves so that we have answers to the questions which people ask about what the Christian faith stands for.

The writer to the Hebrews urged his readers to go beyond the elementary principles. He stressed the need to go on to Christian maturity:

Therefore, leaving the elementary message about the Messiah, let us go on to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, faith in God, teaching about ritual washings, laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And we will do this if God permits (Hebrews 6:1-3 CSB).

The believers are to know the basics of the faith—what they believe. However, to go on to Christian maturity, we need to get beyond the basics.

#### Know Why We Believe

Once we know *what* we believe about God, then we should know *why* we believe. Peter wrote the following to the believers in his day:

But dedicate your lives to Christ as Lord. Always be ready to defend your confidence in God when anyone asks you to explain it. However, make your defense with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15 God's Word).

We should know the answers to a number of questions about the Christian faith. We should know why we believe the Bible is the Word of God, why the Christian faith is true, why the New Testament is reliable, as well as why Jesus is whom He claimed to be.

Our confidence in the God of Scripture will grow as we know what we believe about Him, as well as why we believe it.

### **The Evidence Is Plentiful**

The good news is that the evidence for the Christian faith is plentiful. Indeed, it is overwhelming. When we examine the facts that the Lord has given us, there is no intellectual excuse whatsoever for not believing. None.

### **Apply Principle Three!**

This is another key to living a successful Christian life. Know what you believe, and why you believe it. Knowing these things, and putting them into practice, will go a long way toward living a life that is pleasing to God.

### **Summary To Question 34:**

#### **Why Is It Important That We Know What And Why We Believe? (Principle 3)**

As believers, we should have an accurate view of the God of the Bible, as well as a truthful view of ourselves.

Indeed, we need to know who God is, as well as who we are. These principles are primary.

We should then move on to know exactly what we believe about the God we serve, and why we believe it. This will immensely help us in living the Christian life.

When we realize that God truly exists, and we begin learning exactly what He is like, we will grow in our appreciation and love for Him, as well as our desire to serve Him. In addition, it will increase our confidence in Him.

Among other things, we will realize that we can trust God's promises—the Lord will never fail us. Indeed, we will discover from Scripture, that time and time again, He has made promises to His people, and has come through with His promises. The Lord is always good to His Word.

Not only do we need to know what we believe about the God of the Bible, it is also important that we understand why we believe in Him. In other words, we need to know the evidence for the truthfulness of the Christian faith.

Why should we trust the Bible? Why should we believe that Jesus performed miracles? Why should we assume that He rose from the dead? We must be able to answer these questions.

The good news is that there is plentiful evidence to answer these, as well as other questions, that skeptics may ask. Indeed, the evidence for the existence of the God of the Bible is overwhelming.

An honest look at the evidence should convince the most skeptical. We are to know that evidence, and to present it to those who are inquiring about the faith.

This is an important principle to apply. We should know what we believe, as well as why we believe it. In doing so, it will help us live a successful Christian life.

Thus, our third principle, know what you believe and why you believe it, is essential for Christian growth.

### Question 35

#### **Why Is It Absolutely Necessary That We Do Not Compromise Our Beliefs? (Principle 4)**

If we have a biblical view of God, a proper view of ourselves, and know what and why we believe, we should then be careful not to compromise any of those convictions.

Scripture lists a number of truths about God, us, and the world in which we live in. These truths must be believed, as well as lived out in our lives.

This brings us to principle number four in our quest to live a successful Christian life—we should never compromise our convictions.

#### **We Must Not Compromise Our Belief System**

It is of crucial importance that we do not compromise our beliefs about God. We live at a time when it is popular to say that *all* belief systems are acceptable. In fact, it is common to hear people claim that it does not really matter what someone believes, as long as they believe it enough. Furthermore, if what they believe helps them, they assume that this is all that really matters.

Consequently, we are told that we should not try to tell anyone that their belief system is wrong, or to attempt to convert them to our belief system. All beliefs are acceptable—according to this line of reasoning. Nothing is rejected.

However, the Bible does not teach this perspective. The living God has revealed Himself to humanity. In doing so, the Lord has made it clear that there are things which are true, and there are things which are not true.

Thus, the Bible teaches that there are beliefs which are right, and there are wrong beliefs. It does matter what we believe.

#### **There Is Only One God Who Exists**

For example, Scripture says that only one God exists. We read about this in the Book of Isaiah:

You are my witnesses—this is the Lord's declaration—and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. No god was formed before me, and there will be none after me (Isaiah 43:10 CSB).

No god was formed before the Lord, neither will there be any god formed after Him. He is the only God who exists.

Again, we read in the Book of Isaiah:

This is what the LORD says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the LORD Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God (Isaiah 44:6 NIV).

The message of Scripture is clear—only one God exists. It is absolutely necessary to believe this biblical truth.

### **There Is Only One Way To Reach The One God**

Furthermore, this one God has revealed Himself exclusively through Jesus Christ. He is the one way to reach the one God. Jesus said to the religious leaders of His day:

I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am *the one I claim to be*, you will indeed die in your sins (John 8:24 NIV).

On another occasion, Jesus emphasized that nobody could come to God the Father except through Him. John records Jesus saying:

I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me (John 14:6 NIV).

This is a very exclusive claim! Jesus said that He Himself is the one way to reach the one God. There is no other way.

### **Faith Must Be In Jesus Christ**

According to Scripture, faith is only as good as the object in which we place it. All of the faith in the world will not help us if we place it in the wrong object. Our faith must be in the right object—the God of the Bible through the Person of Jesus Christ.

John wrote about the necessity of believing in Jesus:

Who is the liar, if not the one who denies that Jesus is the Messiah? He is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son can have the Father; he who confesses the Son has the Father as well (1 John 2:22,23 CSB).

Nobody can have a relationship with the only God who exists unless they go through the Person of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, the Lord has told us what we must believe if we are to be in a right relationship with Him. It does matter what we believe.

### **We Must Not Compromise Our Behavior**

Not only are we not to compromise our belief system, we should not compromise our behavior. It is not enough that we merely say we believe something. Our actions need to back up our words.

Therefore, we are to “walk our talk.” If we truly believe something, then we will live it. If we do not live it, then we do not really believe it.

Indeed, Paul wrote to the Corinthians about believers being a “new creation,” a “new person,” in Jesus Christ:

Anyone who belongs to Christ is a new person. The past is forgotten, and everything is new. God has done it all! He sent Christ to make peace between himself and us, and he has given us the work of making peace between himself and others (2 Corinthians 5:17-18 CEV).

We need to live according to our new life. John wrote about how believers need to follow the example of Christ:

If we say we are his, we must follow the example of Christ (1 John 2:6 CEV).

Consequently, the Christian should be concerned about not compromising what they believe, or how they behave. This is another way to live a successful Christian life.

Therefore, let us strive to apply this fourth principle, and not compromise what we believe about God, or how we live out our beliefs.

**Summary To Question 35:  
Why Is It Absolutely Necessary That We  
Do Not Compromise Our Beliefs? (Principle 4)**

If we want to live a successful Christian life, there are a number of principles which we must put into practice. One of these principles concerns what we believe, our belief system, as well as how we live out these beliefs in our lives. It is essential that we do not compromise what we believe, or how we behave.

The Bible tells us who God is, who we are, as well as what He requires from us. The Lord makes it clear what is right and what is wrong. He tells us a number of truths about His existence and character. We must hold to these beliefs.

While it is popular in our day and age to compromise these beliefs, this is something which we should not do. We should not alter our view of God merely because it may be unpopular at a certain time, and in a certain place.

Consequently, we need to stand up for His truth. This includes proclaiming that only one God exists, and that there is only one way to reach this one God—through the Person of Jesus Christ.

In addition, each of us must personally believe in Christ to know this one God, and to be saved from our sins. These beliefs cannot be compromised.

There is something else we cannot compromise—our behavior. We should not change our behavior because everyone seems to be acting a certain way. Scripture tells us how we must conduct our lives.

Believers in Christ must be obedient as to how the Lord commands us to live. This is another area in which we cannot compromise.

Therefore, we not only must stand for our Christian beliefs, we must live consistently with what we say we believe. This is an important principle to put into practice if we want to live successfully in the sight of the Lord.

Consequently, it is essential that we learn how to personally apply principle number four to our lives. May we never compromise these convictions.

### Question 36

#### **Why Is It Important That We Do Not Major On The Minors? (Principle 5)**

It is absolutely essential that believers in Jesus Christ emphasize the things which are important. We are to major on the things which are fundamental to our faith. We should not waste our time on minor areas which will have no impact on eternity. In other words, Christians should never “major on the minors.” This is another key to successful Christian living.

There are a number of important things about this principle which we must put into practice. They can be summed up as follows:

#### **We Must Realize That Everything Will Perish**

For one thing, we cannot take our possessions with us into the next world. Paul wrote to Timothy and emphasized this fact:

For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out.  
(1 Timothy 6:7 CSB).

This is a truth we all can appreciate. We come into this world with nothing, and we leave this world with nothing. Therefore, life is more than what we possess. Jesus made this clear:

Then he said, “Beware! Don’t be greedy for what you don’t have. Real life is not measured by how much we own” (Luke 12:15 NLT).

Our lives consist of more than what we own. Consequently, it is the eternal things which should occupy our thoughts and our behavior. These are the important things.

Therefore, we should always keep this in the forefront of our minds, as we conduct our daily lives. Everything should be placed into proper perspective.

#### **Be Mainly Known As Someone Who Is For Jesus: Not Anti-Something**

As Christians, we are always going to be against certain things. Indeed, since the Bible has given us eternal standards of right and wrong, there are a number of things which we will always protest against.

However, we should not be known for what we are against. We should be known as who we are for—someone who is pro-Jesus!

In other words, our lives should be characterized as people who promote Jesus Christ and His kingdom. Everything else should be placed somewhere way into the background. We are here on this earth to promote Him.

### **Do Not Waste Your Life On Secondary Matters**

Hence, we should not waste our life on matters which are of secondary importance. Life is too short for this. To live successfully, we must spend our lives majoring on those areas which are important to God. If we do this, then we will live a successful Christian life.

We should ask the Lord for wisdom as to how to apply this important principle to our daily existence. Our lives should never be characterized as majoring on the minors.

#### **Summary To Question 36: Why Is It Important That We Do Not Major On The Minors? (Principle 5)**

One of the most important lessons we can learn in life is putting everything into perspective. When we do this, it will cause us to order our priorities. Life is short, and each of us should spend our time majoring on the things which are of the highest importance. In other words, we should major on the majors.

However, too often, those who believe in Jesus Christ major on the minors—they spend their time on things which have little value, or no value, as far as eternity is concerned. This is tragic. If we want to live a fulfilling Christian life, then we should spend our time majoring on those things which are important, as far as eternity is concerned.

The priority of the Christian should be to get out the message of Christ to the world. This should be our primary goal. All other things should have secondary importance.

Indeed, any possessions we have in this world will remain in this world—we cannot take them with us. It is only the treasures we earn in heaven that have any lasting value. These are the things which we should be storing up.

This being the case, we should be careful how we spend our time. While there are a number of worthy causes in this world, they all pale in comparison to getting out the message of God.

Therefore, we should make it our practice to live out this fifth principle: Don't major on the minors.

### Question 37

#### Why Should We Remember To Forget The Past? (Principle 6)

If we are to live successfully as believers in Jesus Christ, then we must apply this principle to our lives—we must forget the past, and go forward.

Indeed, the Bible says that Christians are to look to the future—not to the past. The past is the past. We should forget the past, and go on with our lives.

Paul emphasized this when he wrote to the Philippians. He stated it in the following manner:

I don't mean to say that I have already achieved these things or that I have already reached perfection. But I press on to possess that perfection for which Christ Jesus first possessed me. No, dear brothers and sisters, I have not achieved it, but I focus on this one thing: Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us (Philippians 3:12-14 NLT).

We are to forget the things that have happened in the past, and move forward. This is a real key to successful Christian living.

#### **The Past Is Past**

The past should be put behind us. Both the good and the bad should be forgotten. Scripture says that our sins have been put behind us. The psalmist wrote:

He has removed our sins as far from us as the east is from the west (Psalm 103:12 NLT).

This is an important truth. Our sins have been forgiven by God. He will not hold them against us. We have been completely forgiven of everything which we have ever done—because of what Christ has done on the cross of Calvary.

The Bible says that our sins have not only been forgiven, they have been forgotten. The Lord said that He would remember our sins no longer:

I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more (Isaiah 43:25 NIV).

God will no longer remember our sins. This does not mean God forgets what we have done—it means that He does not hold our sins against us.

Therefore, to live successfully, we should be looking forward, not back.

**Summary To Question 37:  
Why Should We Remember To Forget The Past? (Principle 6)**

One of the biggest obstacles for people moving ahead in their Christian experience has to do with past mistakes and sins. They have never forgiven themselves for something they have done. While God has forgiven them, and put it into the past, they have not.

This is where we have to take seriously what the Bible has to say about God, His character, as well as how and why He forgives believers.

Forgiveness is complete, and it is unconditional. The past is the past. We are to own up to our sin, confess it to the Lord, and then put it behind us. We cannot change the past, but we can refrain from committing the same sin, or sins, again.

Christians should always be moving forward. Therefore, it is essential that we “remember to forget.”

### Question 38

#### **Why Is It Necessary That We Reach Out To Others? (Principle 7)**

An importance principle, which all Bible believers need to practice, concerns the necessity to look beyond ourselves, and to reach out to others.

In fact, Scripture commands God's people to do this. We are to be concerned for the needs of others—not merely our own needs. This is how our behavior should be characterized. This is a key for successful Christian living. A number of important points need to be stressed.

#### **Jesus Came For Others**

To begin with, we need to look at the Person of Jesus Christ. The Bible says that when Christ came into the world, He did it for the sake of others—He did not do it for Himself. Jesus emphasized this when he said:

For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many (Matthew 20:28 NLT).

He came into this world to die for our sins—to give His life for us. Simply put, He came to meet the needs of others.

The Apostle Paul emphasized that Jesus did this while each and every one of us was helpless. He wrote the following to the Romans:

Christ died for us at a time when we were helpless and sinful. No one is really willing to die for an honest person, though someone might be willing to die for a truly good person. But God showed how much he loved us by having Christ die for us, even though we were sinful.  
(Romans 5:6-8 CEV).

Jesus gave His life on our behalf while we were still His enemies. He reached out to us when we were in a helpless state.

#### **We Are To Reach Out To Others**

In the same manner, we are commanded to reach out to others with our own lives. Paul wrote to the Philippians:

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others (Philippians 2:4 NIV)

We are to look out for others—not merely ourselves. This is a key truth which we should understand, and put into practice.

#### **God Will Meet All Of Our Needs**

If we are to live successfully from God's viewpoint, then we should be reaching out to others. We should not be overly concerned with our own

personal needs—for God has promised to take care of them. Paul wrote to the Philippians:

And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19 CSB).

We should, therefore, spend our time looking out for the needs of others.

Consequently, another important aspect of living a victorious Christian life concerns our reaching out to those in need. Like Jesus, we should reach out to others. This is an important principle to learn and to apply.

**Summary To Question 38:  
Why Is It Necessary That We Reach  
Out To Others? (Principle 7)**

One of the most important things that a Christian can learn is how to reach out to others. The Bible says that Jesus Christ came to our world for the sake of others. His life, from beginning to end, was a selfless example of how to meet the needs of other people.

In the same manner, our lives should be patterned after His—we need to reach out to others. This means that our prayers, as well as our actions, should have others in mind.

The Lord has promised to take care of our own needs. Our responsibility is to be His ambassadors, and to meet the needs of others. This often means giving up some of our own desires and goals. If we practice this principle, then our lives will not only be more fulfilling, they will be exciting above anything which we could ask or think.

Consequently, this seventh principle, reach out to others, is another essential key in living a successful Christian life.

### Question 39

#### **Why Is It Important That We Not Be Disillusioned? (Principle 8)**

Many Christians either stop serving Jesus Christ, or at least are slowed down in their ministry for Him, because of some disillusionment they have experienced. It is usually because of some particular event which occurred, or some behavior of a specific individual, that has caused them to become disillusioned. Things did not work out the way in which they expected.

Therefore, instead of following after Christ with all of their heart, soul, and mind, they sit on the sidelines. Disillusionment causes them to be stagnant.

This is tragic. Consequently, “Principle 8,” in our quest to live successfully, encourages us not to be disillusioned.

Some may reply that this is easy to say, but not so easy to do—especially when certain catastrophic events occur. Disillusionment is the natural response. How do we respond to this? Why shouldn’t we become disillusioned? There are a number of things we need to say in response.

#### **Christ Will Never Disillusion Us**

We cannot overemphasize the fact that while human beings, as well as circumstances, may disillusion us, Jesus Christ, God the Son, will never let us down. He will never cause us any type of disillusionment. The writer to the Hebrews said:

Such a large crowd of witnesses is all around us! So we must get rid of everything that slows us down, especially the sin that just won’t let go. And we must be determined to run the race that is ahead of us. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, who leads us and makes our faith complete. He endured the shame of being nailed to a cross, because he knew that later on he would be glad he did. Now he is seated at the right side of God’s throne! (Hebrews 12:1-2 CEV).

Jesus is the One who we are to always look to. When we look to others, we are certain to become disillusioned. Human beings, no matter who they are, will always let us down. Each and every one of us fails. We still have that sinful nature, and we continue to do things which we should not do.

#### **We Should Never Look To Others For The Perfect Example**

Therefore, anyone who is looking to another human being as an example of what to say, or how to behave, is eventually going to be disappointed. No matter how godly or sincere someone may be, sooner or later they are going to fail at something. When this occurs none of us should be surprised.

Unfortunately, too many people place their hopes in some person who they think will be “their answer.” It will never happen.

The Apostle Paul told Timothy to pattern his life after Paul's own example:

Now follow the example of the correct teaching I gave you, and let the faith and love of Christ be your model. You have been trusted with a wonderful treasure. Guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit, who lives within you (2 Timothy 1:13-14 CEV).

Paul faithfully taught Timothy the truth of the gospel. Yet, at the same time, Paul confessed to still falling short of God's perfect standard.

While other believers in Christ can, and should, be examples to us on how to behave, they will never be that perfect example. They cannot be. Indeed, Jesus alone is our only cure for disillusionment.

**Summary To Question 39:**

**Why Is It Important That We Not Be Disillusioned? (Principle 8)**

Sadly, disillusionment keeps many believers from being the type of Christian that the Lord would have us to be. Indeed, since some person, or event, lets us down, we become disillusioned and, in turn, we stop being the person whom the Lord wants us to be.

Oftentimes the source of our disillusionment is some Christian to whom we have admired. This person, who can do no wrong in our eyes, has disillusioned us.

The remedy for disillusionment is the Person of Jesus Christ. He will never cause us to be disillusioned—He will never let us down. Jesus always keeps His Word—always comes through with His promises.

However, when we place another person as the object of our Christian faith, we will eventually become disillusioned. No matter how wonderful any person may be, sooner or later they will fail. They all do.

Therefore, to live successfully in God's sight, we must not become disillusioned. The remedy? Always look to Jesus.

## Question 40

### **Why Is It Important That We Remain Flexible To God's Leading? (Principle 9)**

God works in mysterious ways. We need to be flexible to the different methods by which He works. We have our plans—but God also has His. One of the things which we will discover is that His plans are not always our plans. This is why “Principle 9” is so important—we need to be flexible to the leading of the Lord.

#### **Life Is Uncertain**

One thing that we know for sure, is that life itself is uncertain. This obvious fact is mentioned in the Book of James:

Pay attention to this! You're saying, "Today or tomorrow we will go into some city, stay there a year, conduct business, and make money." You don't know what will happen tomorrow. What is life? You are a mist that is seen for a moment and then disappears. Instead, you should say, "If the Lord wants us to, we will live and carry out our plans." However, you brag because you're arrogant. All such bragging is evil. (James 4:13-16 God's Word).

None of us can arrogantly claim that we will be doing something tomorrow, or that we will be going somewhere. It is only *if* the Lord wills that we will do something, or go somewhere. Indeed, we have no guarantee that we will live until tomorrow.

#### **We Belong To Him**

Believers must remember that we now belong to Him—we are not our own any longer. Paul wrote to the Corinthians and emphasized this fact:

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body (1 Corinthians 6:19,20 NIV).

We are His. Therefore, the Lord can do with us whatever He wishes.

#### **Jesus Wants Us To Live Life To The Fullest**

Jesus wants to give us a fulfilling life. In the gospel of John, we discover that one of the purposes of His coming to the earth is to give abundant life to those who belong to Him:

A thief comes only to rob, kill, and destroy. I came so that everyone would have life, and have it in its fullest (John 10:10 CEV).

This is a promise which we can claim. We can have abundant life, life to the maximum, through Jesus Christ our Lord. He wants the best for us.

### **He Will Direct Our Steps**

How can believers in Christ have this abundant life? For one thing, the Lord Himself has promised to direct our steps. He will do this if we place our trust in Him. This is His promise to us. In the Book of Proverbs, we read of this promise:

Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5,6 NIV).

When we trust in Him, He has promised to direct us. We need to be flexible to His direction—we need to go the ways in which He guides us to go.

### **The Steps Are Simple**

There are simple steps to follow. First, we trust Him with all of our being—we do not try to plan everything ourselves. He is our ultimate guide.

Next, we acknowledge Him in everything which we do. Jesus Christ is the Lord of all. We must admit to this fact.

If we do this, then the Lord has promised to direct our paths. This is a promise that we can count on. He is the Director—we are the followers.

### **Be Flexible!**

Therefore, to live successfully in God's sight, we must be flexible to His plans. He is the One who directs our steps—we do not direct ourselves. Let us never forget this.

### **Summary To Question 40: Why Is It Important That We Remain Flexible To God's Leading? (Principle 9)**

Believers need to be flexible to the leading of the Spirit of God. While we should have certain goals for our lives, we should adjust these goals when particular situations arise. We cannot control everything which will happen to us.

Indeed, as each of us looks back on our own life, we discover that so many things occurred which were completely unexpected. Some of these things were good, and some of them were bad. However, when they did occur, we had to adjust accordingly.

Therefore, it is important that we should not attempt to force God to fit into our preconceived plans. The Lord wants to give us an abundant life—He knows what is best for us.

In fact, He knows us better than we know ourselves. This is why He will allow certain events to occur which we do not completely understand. Yet, because we can trust Him completely, we can rest assured that He always has our best interest in mind. Faith is active—it is not static. We should move out in faith, and trust that God is leading us. However, we should also be sensitive to the idea that the Lord may have a slightly different direction for us—or perhaps a completely different direction altogether. We do not know—He does. Therefore, it is important that we remain flexible to His leading.

Consequently, this is why we make such a point out of this ninth principle. Indeed, we are to be flexible.

## Question 41

### Why Should We Expect The Unexpected? (Principle 10)

Finally, if we put the previous nine principles into practice, then we should “expect the unexpected” from the Lord. The God of the Bible is the God of the unexpected. Scripture tells us, time and time again, that He works in ways in which neither believers, nor unbelievers, could have expected.

Jesus compared the work of God to the wind:

Only God’s Spirit gives new life. The Spirit is like the wind that blows wherever it wants to. You can hear the wind, but you don’t know where it comes from or where it is going (John 3:8 CEV).

The Spirit of God often works in ways in which we do not expect.

#### **We Should Expect The Lord To Do Mighty Things**

We read the following in the Book of Jeremiah:

Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know (Jeremiah 33:3 NKJV).

If we trust in Him, the Lord has promised to show each of us great and mighty things!

#### **Expect To Live An Exciting Life**

The Christian faith should never be boring. Following the God of Scripture can be described in many ways, but the word “boring” is not one of them. Jesus said.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (John 10:10 NIV).

The King James Version translated Jesus’ word’s in this manner:

I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly (John 10:10 KJV).

Life is exciting in Jesus Christ. Indeed, an abundant life is certainly not a boring life!

#### **Be Expecting Great Things!**

The missionary William Carey said, “Attempt great things for God, expect great things from God.” This should be our goal. We have a great God, and we should see His greatness in our lives. However, many times His greatness comes in ways unexpected to us.

Consequently, to live successfully in the sight of the Lord we should expect the unexpected.

**Summary To Question 41:**

**Why Should We Expect The Unexpected? (Principle 10)**

The final principle, which we offer, sums up the previous nine. If we have a biblical view of God, as well as a proper view of ourselves; if we know what we believe about God, and why we believe it; if we do not compromise these convictions, but hold firm to them; if we then spend our lives majoring on the things which are important, and not on the trivial; if we forget the defeats and victories of the past, and continue to move forward; if our main concern is the good of others and not ourselves; if we keep our eyes upon Jesus alone, and not become disillusioned, and if we remain flexible to His leading, then we should expect the unexpected. We can live a successful Christian life.

This is what the Lord wants for all of those who belong to Him.

## Question 42

### What Is The Great Commission?

As we close our book on Christian Living there is one last thing that needs to be mentioned. The Gospel of Matthew ends with what is known as the “Great Commission.” These are the final recorded words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples according to Matthew. In it, Jesus gave the following command to His disciples:

I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19,20 NLT).

His immediate disciples were commanded to make other disciples. Furthermore, they were to make them from people out of every nation on the earth. This was their primary job after the Lord left the earth.

In this passage Jesus gives the church its marching orders. We are to go into every part of the world and preach the good news to all people.

#### 1. The Lord Will Provide Power For Believers To Preach

The Book of Acts records a further command of Jesus on the subject. This was given immediately before He ascended into heaven:

But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power and will tell people about me everywhere-- in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8 NLT).

The Lord provides power for us so that we will be able to tell others the good news.

The Holy Spirit of God will come upon us so that we can accomplish this task. We are certainly not powerless to spread His message!

#### 2. We Are To Make Disciples

Our purpose, according to the Great Commission, is to make disciples. A disciple is a follower. After people respond to the gospel, or good news, about Jesus and are converted, they are to become disciples of Jesus. Jesus said, “Learn from Me.” Matthew records Jesus’ teaching about the necessity of learning from Him. Jesus said:

If you are tired from carrying heavy burdens, come to me and I will give you rest. Take the yoke I give you. Put it on your shoulders and learn from me. I am gentle and humble, and you will find rest. This yoke is easy to bear, and this burden is light (Matthew 11:28-30 CEV).

It is not enough that people believe in Jesus. To the contrary, this is just the beginning. We need to make these new believers followers of Him, His disciples.

### **3. We Are To Go Into Every Nation To Do This**

In doing so, we are to take the message of Jesus to every nation. The message of Christ is for the entire world. In Luke's gospel we read the following words of an angel, to a group of shepherds, when Jesus was born:

“Don't be afraid!” he said. “I bring you good news that will bring great joy to all people. The Savior—yes, the Messiah, the Lord—has been born today in Bethlehem, the city of David! (Luke 2:10,11 NLT).

The Bible is clear in its message that Jesus is the Savior of the entire world and the entire world needs to hear the message of Jesus. It is brought to the world through us, His disciples.

### **4. Converts Should Be Baptized In The Name Of The Father, Son, And Holy Spirit**

Once they have believed in Jesus the first step is water baptism. The formula given by Jesus is Trinitarian: in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These are the three members of the Godhead—the Holy Trinity. It is in the name or authority of each of them that a new convert is to be baptized.

### **5. Discipleship Is A Lifelong Process**

One other thing is necessary to note. Belief in Jesus Christ saves the person immediately. Their sins are forgiven and they pass from spiritual death to spiritual life. Yet discipleship does not happen instantly. Indeed, it is a lifelong process. To be a disciple of Jesus one must count the cost. While it is not always easy it is always rewarding. In fact, following Jesus Christ is the only way to live!

This sums up the Great Commission. It is something that all believers are charged with fulfilling. May the Lord send more workers into the harvest to fulfill this command of Jesus.

### **Summary To Question 42 What Is The Great Commission?**

The last commandment that is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew is what is known as the Great Commission. Jesus gave the Great Commission to His disciples shortly before He left the world.

In it, our Lord told them to make disciples of all nations. This means teaching those who have made a commitment to Jesus. This command still pertains to all Christians today. This was the responsibility of Jesus' immediate disciples and it is also our responsibility.

Indeed, our job is to go out into this lost world, into all nations, with the message of Jesus. Once people respond to the gospel message we then go about making them disciples of the Lord. Those who believe in Jesus as the Christ are to submit themselves to water baptism. The baptism should be made in the name, or authority, of each member of the Holy Trinity-- God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

While salvation from sin takes place the very instant when a person turns to Christ the making of a disciple is a lifelong process. It takes time and it takes commitment. There is a cost to be paid for discipleship but the rewards are truly great.

### **About The Author**

Don Stewart is a graduate of Biola University and Talbot Theological Seminary (with the highest honors).

Don is a best-selling and award-winning author having authored, or co-authored, over seventy books. This includes the best-selling *Answers to Tough Questions*, with Josh McDowell, as well as the award-winning book *Family Handbook of Christian Knowledge: The Bible*. His various writings have been translated into over thirty different languages and have sold over a million copies. His available books can be found on his website [www.educatingourworld.com](http://www.educatingourworld.com).

Don is now a full-time missionary with GoinChrist Ministries. His website [educatingourworld.com](http://educatingourworld.com) provides free resources for those wanting to know what Christians believe, as well as why we believe. Currently there are 61 books on the site in PDF form, totaling about 13,000 pages of material while answering over 1,900 questions. Eventually we hope to record all the books, as well as translating the material in other languages.